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ABSTRACT

Focusing on reader response in the classroom, the works collected in this book represent the results of a five-week summer institute in which 25 middle school, high school, and college teachers studied the principles and applications of literature instruction. The following essays are included: an introduction by G. Garber; "An Overview of the Method" (P. Hansbury); "Reader Response: Theory and Practice" (P. Hansbury); "Formalist Criticism in the Secondary Classroom" (R. DeFabio); "A Formalist Lesson Plan for Salinger's 'A Perfect Day for Bananafish' Used with Advanced Seventh Grades" (M. McKay); "A Formalist Lesson: 'The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner'" (C. Forman); "Introduction to Historical/Cultural Methods of Literary Inquiry and Instruction" (M. Kelley); "An Historical-Cultural Approach to 'The Whole Town's Sleeping'" (J. Butterfield); "Introduction to Psychological Criticism" (B. A. Boyce); "A Psychoanalytic Approach to Joseph Conrad's 'The Secret Sharer'" (G. B. Kamm); "A Psychological Critic Looks at 'A Narrow Fellow in the Grass'" (D. J. Marhafer); "Overview of Mythological Criticism" (D. M. Quick); "The Application of Archetypal Criticism to John Knowles 'A Separate Peace'" (D. M. Quick); "A Feminist Archetypal Approach to 'Jane Eyre'" (R. Y. DeFabio); "Multiple Critical Approaches to 'A Rose for Emily'" (C. Reynolds); "Multiple Critical Approaches to 'One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest'" (C. Forman); and "Yes, But Does It Work?" (D. M. Quick). (JD)

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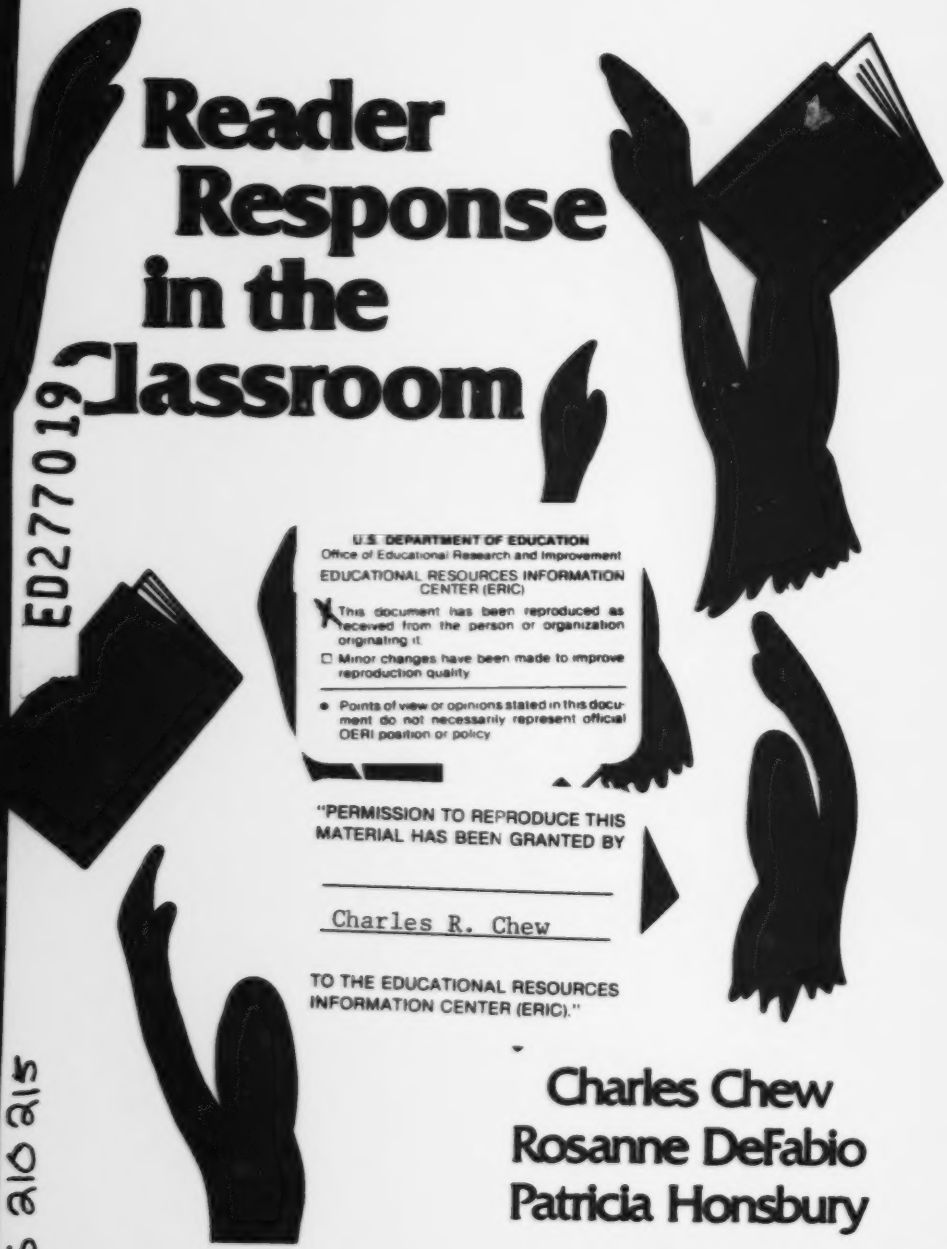
# Reader Response in the Classroom



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## Preface

Literature is the content of the English classroom and the means by which generations are connected. As English teachers, we expend much of our energy in sharing with our students our joy and understanding of the written word. We want them not only to experience a close relationship with literature but also to develop a lasting and abiding desire to be readers.

The material that follows in Reader Response in the Classroom directs instruction beyond a mere acquaintance with a text. Through lucid explanations of the various schools of criticism which guide our understanding of a literary work, we gain insight into the ways to explicate a text. The specific instructional strategies used to illustrate each critical approach can guide even the most experienced teacher in day-to-day work with students, and students will gain a fuller appreciation of literature when they have a multiplicity of approaches to use in their reading of text. Instruction and learning should be enriched by Reader Response in the Classroom.

Charles R. Chew

Acknowledgments

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Charles R. Chew

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# Introduction

Eugene Garber

## History

For five weeks in the summer of 1983 twenty-five of us (middle school, high school, college English teachers) gathered together to study the teaching of literature. Several of us on the staff of the Capital District Writing Project (a site of the National Writing Project) had submitted a grant proposal to the National Endowment for the Humanities -- under the rather forbidding title "The Application of Contemporary Criticism to the Secondary Teaching of Literature." In the proposal we set forth our reasons for believing that teachers could expand their pedagogical repertoires through the study of a variety of interpretive perspectives -- reader response, formalist/structuralist, historical/cultural, psychological, and archetypal. Fortunately for us the Endowment responded favorably and funded our proposed summer institute. This collection of essays is a product of that institute and of the activities that followed it: a year-long seminar devoted principally to the design of instruction; an intensive three-day institute during which we shared with teachers not in the project the instructional techniques we had developed; and panels conducted by project teachers at the annual conferences of the New York State English Council, the National Council of the Teachers of English, the Conference on College Composition and Communication, and the New York State Education Department. And still we continue to meet regularly to argue about texts and about teaching. Consequently, what follows is not a set of findings chiseled in stone, but an account of principles, interpretive strategies, and pedagogical applications still very much in a state of dynamic tension and testing -- and with no intention that they should ever be otherwise. If the universe is dynamic and open, so is the literature that tries to represent it and so, in turn, are

the interpretive strategies that attempt to unfold that literature, and so, in turn, are the means of teaching it and the teachers who use those means. Nevertheless, it seemed to us and to others worth pausing long enough to report our work to date.

Enough of history.

Principles

Consider three fundamental working principles, which I will state rather nakedly and even dogmatically:

1. The act of understanding and interpreting a work of art must be preceded by engagement -- an imaginative, emotional, even visceral experience of impact.
2. Students cannot fully understand a work of art or truly make it their own until they have viewed it carefully from a variety of perspectives.
3. Students cannot convincingly verify for themselves or for others that they fully understand a work of art until they can resymbolize it in other terms, usually verbal.

The remainder of this introduction explores the implications of these three propositions for teachers. I begin with an analogy.

Impact

Suppose that you have, in a moment of touristy ebullience, taken with your companion a carriage up the hill above Florence, there to view a little known statue in an out-of-the-way piazza -- a young Apollo sometimes ascribed to Michelangelo but in all probability executed by a student or an imitator. You and your companion climb down from your carriage, and the driver pulls off to the side to await your readiness to return down the hill to the city. It is mid-afternoon. The sun, halfway in its descent from zenith to horizon, is casting precisely that slant light you guess the sculptor in his placement of the marble figure considered ideal.

The first thing you are aware of is an extraordinarily profound sense of privilege -- that you are here with your companion, that this object of remarkable beauty has survived war and weather, that its crisp autumn shadow lies scarcely distorted by the cobblestones of the piazza directly at your feet, that if you step forward your own shadow will mingle with that shadow, even as already the presence of the statue and its maker seem to be mingling with the presences of you and your companion -- neither in 15th-century Florence nor in 20th-century Florence but in a middle ground where the horizons of those two centuries, which you thought irrevocably intangent, touch now to create a magical condition of charged and heightened response. So, for a long time you are aware that you are not only looking at the statue but at yourself, or more precisely at some part of yourself that had been a long time readying itself for a moment like this. And so you realize that even as you begin to walk around the statue, seemingly giving yourself entirely over to its beauties, you will, however unconsciously, continue to discover yourself.

Perspectives

Because the sun is behind the statue, details are for the moment obscured by shadow, and happily so, because your eye necessarily concentrates for a while on shape and contour, the lovely balance of the figure -- the left arm relaxed by its side, the fingers curled in to the thigh; the right arm lifted up, the hand on the shoulder, holding a chlamys that has been flung carelessly over the back. And below the relaxed arm the knee is bent ever so slightly, as if to shift weight preparatory to stepping forward. But the other leg is a delicate column, the foot planted lightly. What a curious contract this figure has made with gravity and earth, suggesting that some other medium is more natural to it.

You continue your slow circuit of the statue until you reach a vantage from which the figure is seen standing against the city below, the famous river Arno now

a golden ribbon that leads your eye under the campanille and the cathedral, where (you know though you cannot see) Ghiberti's doors depict the life of Jesus. Apollo and Jesus. What other than the Renaissance in Italy could have harmonized those seemingly incompatible figures? Your mind spins away to a whole panorama of pagan and Christian statuary -- Laocoon, Zeus, David, the Pieta. And then, surprisingly, there arises in your mind's eye a cruel and beautiful face, symbol of the gorgeous despotism of the Italian city states. The De Medici? Paradoxical patrons of beauty. Murderous connoisseurs. Tonight you will return to your guide book with greater interest.

But at the moment your companion is beckoning you on to a vantage directly behind the figure and pointing to the chlamys, among the marble folds of which the sun has spied out an emblem, itself an irradiant globe -- sun upon sun. And immediately you take your companion's meaning. This is the great mythic Apollo, the sun god, the god of reason and light, the antithesis of riotous and irrational Dionysius. This is the very essence of Western civilization, at least from Plato on -- the ideal of the balanced, the examined, the illuminated mind and life. But this god has never triumphed completely, probably never will. Dionysius, the spirit of night and of unreason, is always with us -- sometimes inspirationally, sometimes demonically, as when on this very soil half a century ago the Fascists raised their dread emblems of power. Is that why the sun on Apollo's chlamys is half obscured in folds of marble shadow?

Now, almost completing your circuit, you have reached a vantage from which the face is best seen. There shines the sublimity you expected all right -- the broad forehead crowned with a filet of laurel, the blank marble of the eyes shadowed and deep, the nose aquiline inevitably, the chin perfect. But there is something else here, something unexpected. Perhaps it is in the mouth, which curls with a suspicion of a smile. In any case, there is a suggestion of insouciance here.

You had already seen it in the careless toss of the chlamys and in the earth disdaining crook of the knee. But you did not, until just now, consider the disturbing possibility that this lovely figure is not so much with us as passing briefly among us, and is not so much moved as amused by the panorama that spreads below -- Florence, her lurid history, her spectacles of human joy and suffering.

Resymbolization

Now it is time to go back down to the city. In the carriage you and your companion, after the inevitable silence of awe, begin to talk. And because you are close, you tell each other of your feelings, of the way the statue slowly grew in your mind's eye and even in your tactile sense (though you never touched it) until you were filled with its presence, suffused by it. You talk of the beauties of its form. You recall for each other the culture and history that surrounded its making, and you speculate about the meaning it had for its contemporaries -- was it the same meaning as it has for you now, and indeed for all those generations and centuries between? You mark for each other its mythical significance, those abiding archetypes of sun and balance, however imperfectly realized in human history. And finally you delve into the implied character of the figure -- nobility curiously invaded by hints of fecklessness and even impishness. The ears -- you forgot to look closely at the ears. Were they altogether concealed by the lovely ringlets of marble or was there a hint of faun? Some day you must go back together. You must look even more closely. But now the sun is almost down and the carriage is rattling gaily along Via Argento. The city lights are winking on.

The Interpretation of Literature

Why, you may wonder, in a book on literature have we spent so much time with a statue? I want to insist that books are like statues, indeed very like statues, and especially in their requirements for appreciation. I want to shake our old

habits of mind that tend to see books as flat two-dimensional objects that lie open on the non descript surfaces of desks. I want to insist that books have all the dimensionality of statues and all the rich splendor of historical background.

Consider. Was there any act of perception our two companions performed with the statue that you and I cannot perform with a text? Let's see. First they stood awed and simply took the statue in; they gave uninhibited play to their feelings; they even discovered in themselves latent sympathies and emotional contours that they had never before fully realized. Well, among these essays you will find a discussion of reader response criticism and you will read descriptions of how teachers help students open themselves to literature, help students feel and understand that even as they read stories, stories read them.

Back to our companions of the piazza. Remember, seeing the statue almost in silhouette, they attended to its form, its disposition of mass and shape, its balance. Again, in these essays you will find discussions of literary form. Teachers will describe how they have tried to help students discover that perceptions of form are indispensable for interpretation of meaning. The refrain of a ballad is no more a mere repetition than the crook of Apollo's knee is an ingenious arrangement of contour -- both reveal an attitude, an attitude that helps interpret meaning.

Presently our companions took up station at a point where the background, the panorama of the famous city, created a charged context for the statue, one steeped in the passage of time and in its products, which we call history. In this book we have tried to suggest how students can enrich their understanding of story, poem, play if they can begin to see the work they are studying as one image, among many, of the experiences, the ideas, the values of a given people at a given time -- if they can hear in the voice of that work the resonance of the whole discourse spoken as with one tongue by the holders of a common culture.

In our companions' circuit of the statue they came inevitably to the solar emblem of the sun god, and to the light and reason that the sun represents. So do we readers, we try to show here, inevitably come to the manifest or buried myths that undergird the most mundane seeming fictions. We tell how we try to show our students that we are by nature symbolists and myth-makers. Sometimes the mythical content of a literary work, we say, takes an elaborate form: the journey the hero/heroine must make to the dark place to confront the monster who guards the prize of inestimable value. Sometimes, more simply, it takes the form of an archetype that reverberates with ancient suggestions -- a serpent in the grass, a ferryman by the river bank, the sun in the sign of the ram.

At last our companions fixed their gaze on Apollo's face -- and to a lesser extent on his gestures and posture -- and found there indices of a disturbing character, a complexity they had not foreseen. Where they had expected only divine sublimity they found evidence of a disengagement and even a tendency to self-absorption that gave them pause. Similarly, we try to show in this book how students can probe personality and motive in literature using the insights of psychology. For the characters in texts tend to be, if anything, even more complex than the Apollo.

On their way back to the city our companions, charged with apprehensions of the deep significance of the statue, talked, intensely, volubly. They talked because their comprehension was as yet not fully formed. In talking they came to clearer understandings. Here, too, we try to show how important verbal resymbolization is for the study of literature. We try to furnish some classroom images of students talking, working together, writing. Obviously this is not simply a matter of evaluation (of instruction or of student comprehension) but is an integral part of the learning process. How can we know that we <u>know</u> "Dover Beach" until we create our own verbal artifact which represents in our own words the meaning of

the poem? We can't, and that is why literature classes are so full of talking and writing, of interpretive resymbolizing.

Summary

From here on there will be no further talk of statuary. Still, my earnest wish for the effect of my modest analogy is this: that as teachers encounter here reader-response criticism, formalism, historical/cultural contexts, psychological criticism, and archetypal criticism they will not lose a sense of "walking around", a sense of the art object as virtually infinite in its riches if only we will learn to see from all the vantages that a short life and a demanding profession allow. Indeed, I hope that teachers' appetites for the experience of perspective in literature will be whetted here but not satisfied, that they will study these perspectives more deeply and will go on to inquire about others: feminist, Marxist, deconstructionist, etc. Multiple perspectives, we argue, do not destroy the integrity of a work. On the contrary, they give us a fuller view of the whole. They release us from those narrow habits of mind that tend to locate significance only in beauty, or only in social value, or only in mythical/religious illumination, or only anywhere. They show us that literary meaning is a light that irradiates from a core of artistic achievement outward to a virtually inexhaustible variety of vantage points, for us and for generations of readers to come.

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## An Overview of the Method

Patricia Hansbury

The classroom procedures which we have developed and which are described in this book were created to produce in our students the ability to read literature successfully, both within and outside of the literature classroom. Out of the three principles described in the Introduction (which may be summarized here as engagement, multiple perspectives, and resymbolization) evolved a classroom practice which differs somewhat from the more traditional approaches. This book provides examples of classroom lessons which we have created to teach our students how to use four basic critical approaches, beginning with what is probably the most familiar, formalism, and continuing step-by-step through the historical-cultural method, the psychological, the archetypal. There are also chapters which offer teachers a review of the theory underlying each of these four perspectives. And finally, in the last two chapters are lessons which combine all four perspectives, which may be used once students are familiar with both the procedure and a variety of critical models. It is this towards which we work -teaching students to use independently a multiple critical approach to literature. But first, an overview.

Because this method of reading literature is new to our students, they benefit from seeing an overview of the procedure before discussion of any literature begins. To introduce them to these methods, I usually begin with what might be described as a metaphorical walk up that hill in Florence to the statue of Apollo. The lesson parallels the procedure we will be using in literature classes and will provide a concrete experience to which we can refer throughout the year.

I have an unusual-looking pottery coffee mug which, for this lesson, I bring to class and show to students. Then, I ask them to put together a list of questions:

"Suppose you had to write a feature article about this object. Take a few minutes to list the kind of information you would need to have. What might you want to know about this object?" After some time for thinking and writing, students share their lists and soon we have on the black board a long list of questions which usually includes the following:

What is it made of?
How was it made?
How did you get it?
Where did you get it?
What is it?
Why did the artist make it?
Why did the artist design it that way?
How big is it?
Is this your favorite?
When was it made?
Why is it that shape?
Who gave it to you?
What color is it?
How much does it weigh?
-etc.-

Next, I ask students to organize these questions into categories. Generally, they recognize that there tend to be questions about 1) form or purpose, 2) origin, 3) motivation, and 4) classification. By this time, most of them are wondering what all of this has to do with English class, and usually some students answer that we might ask the same kinds of questions about literature. It is at this point that I introduce the names of the four major critical schools which we will be using in our literary study: Formalism, Historical-Cultural, Psychological, Archetypal. Students are given a brief explanation of each approach also, so that they may see how the questions and categories which they generated parallel the questions that would be asked by literary critics from each of the schools.

Two benefits derive from this lesson. One is that when students have copied the categorized lists from the board and the names of each related school of criticism, they have an overview to which they can later refer when deciding how to approach a particular literary work. Another important result of this lesson is

that it introduces the procedure we will be using in literature class, that of beginning with students' responses to and questions about a work. This technique is based on reader-response theory, the topic of the following chapter, in which both theory and some practical ways to use it as a way into a literary work will be discussed.

Reader Response: Theory and Practice

Patricia Hansbury

## The Theory Behind the Expression

Reader-response theory begins with the reader. As English teachers we might find this statement to be more threatening than obvious. But the implications it carries for literature classes are wonderful rather than anarchic.

What is it that made us want to be English teachers? For many of us, me included, it was that love of literature that arose from a personal reaction to some literary work. It was maybe a single line or phrase, but it struck the inner heart and the effect was permanent. There was then the need to share that revelation, to want others to feel it, too. And so, one thing leads to another. But now, how many years later, how many lessons later, how many of us ask even if only occasionally, why it is that students just don't "appreciate" good literature?

As teachers what we need to do, it seems, is enable students to pay attention to what happens when they read, to see that reading is more than simply a way to get to the end of the story. Reader-response theory is built on the idea that readers will and do respond to the images which the words on the page suggest. Response theorists have made us realize that texts can evoke memories, create expectations, invite conclusions, reverse direction, delay revelation; readers construct meaning and fill in gaps, all while juggling their own memories, beliefs, moods. For students who are used to viewing videos or movies in which action and music take precedent over plot or intrigue, all of this juggling may seem overwhelming. And so, believing in the value of the literary experience, and aiming to make classes less painful and more rewarding for both students and myself, I have lately turned to the response theorists for ideas.

The theories of Louise Rosenblatt, Stanley Fish, Wolfgang Iser, David Bleich, and others have led to teaching techniques which in general accomplish two purposes: One, students are encouraged to focus on the reading process, what Rosenblatt calls the lived-through experience of the text; Two, students' reactions to and questions about a literary work determine the direction of class discussion of that work. The importance of helping students to concentrate on the act of reading is supported by four basic assumptions shared by most response theorists:

1. Reading is an active process;
2. A literary work exists only when a reader and a text interact;
3. Response is not interpretation;
4. Certain conventions of reading literature do exist and can be learned.

Following is an explanation of these assumptions.

1. Reading is an active process.

The special nature of the literary text as an object of study demands a special method of study. In The Act of Reading Wolfgang Iser draws on linguistic theory to explain that since a text - which cannot be perceived all at once, in its wholeness - differs from an object, there can be no traditional subject-object static viewpoint. Instead, "there is a moving viewpoint which travels along inside that which it has to apprehend" (108). The activity of reading is consecutive: the reader grasps the text in pieces - phrases, lines, chapters - so that during the reading "there is a continual interplay between modified expectations" (of what comes next) "and transformed memories" (of what has previously been read of the text). And so, since the "text itself does not formulate expectations...nor does it specify how the connectability of memories is to be implemented," it is left to the reader who must therefore be an active participant in the realization of the literary work (111).

Louise Rosenblatt, who conducted a study (explained in detail in The Reader, The Text, The Poem) in which students were asked to record their immediate thoughts while reading Frost's "It Bids Pretty Fair," found that readers seemed to employ one of two methods to evoke a literary work: some readers apprehended the text piece-by-piece, modifying or rejecting interpretations as they proceeded through the text, while others tried first to grasp the overall idea by reading through quickly and then going back to verify or modify their reading. Either way, readers played an active role in creating the poem - responding, predicting, verifying, and correcting during the reading experience. Rosenblatt found also that readers bring to the reading their own memories, feelings, and attitudes, which images in the text stimulate and which become a part of their evocation of the work. Interpretation, then, is an organizing activity: the reader works to form a coherent and cohesive understanding of the work and his or her actualization of it.

2. A literary work exists only when a reader and a text interact.

Wolfgang Iser compares the activity of reading to what happens when two people view the night sky: each may "be looking at the same collection of stars, but one will see the image of a plough, and the other will make out a dipper" (Implied 282). In the same way, individual readers select and organize particular elements from a text to arrive at their own realization of a literary work. Reading and stargazing both entail "interaction between the explicit and implicit, between revelation and concealment. What is concealed spurs the reader into action, but this action is also controlled by what is revealed" ("Interaction" 111).

Like Iser, Rosenblatt distinguishes between a "poem" and a "text." It is only when a reader and a text "transact," each element "conditioned by and conditioning the other," that a poem is created. The poem is not the same thing as the text. Nor is it the associations or memories or images which appear in the mind of the reader. Instead, the poem exists somewhere in between the text and the reader, and it will be different for every reader every time (Reader 17).

3. Response is not interpretation.

Always, we must be responsible to the text. Rosenblatt suggests that a free, uninhibited reaction to a work is necessary but not sufficient for sound literary judgment (Exploration 75). In the high school classroom, where our responsibility is to teach students how to read literature, it is important to remember this. It is also, I think, comforting to remember. Reader-response does not necessarily imply chaotic, anything-goes kinds of classes. The emotions, associations, memories, and images that students experience while reading are only a beginning place. If we leave them there, we have not done our job.

Nevertheless, for teachers first encountering reader-response theory, the primary question often is, "What if during a lesson on 'Ozymandias' a student insists that for her it is a poem about agriculture? Do we, as teachers who 'know better', have to accept this interpretation?" The answer is, of course not. Although I have found that misconstruction to this degree rarely occurs anyway, there are several ways to solve the problem. One is to do as Rosenblatt suggests: send the student back to the text to verify her reading. Another is to conduct classes in a way that allows for both individual and large group response. I usually ask students to write down their first reactions and questions and then to share their ideas for discussion. Because each student is an individual with individual experiences, viewpoints, and emotions, the reactions to a text do vary and should. That is what helps add to the richness of an interpretation - sharing ideas and hearing what others think. Usually within this framework, ideas and interpretations become modified as the group tries to come to an understanding of the literary work. In this way we become what Stanley Fish calls a "community of interpreters" (Is There a Text...? 346-7). Then from the class's reactions and questions we move to a larger field of vision, bringing in methods of critical analysis (Formalism, etc.) to enlarge and explain initial responses. Eventually, other critics' writings may be explored. All of this,

though, should happen after a student has had time to explore around in a text, develop a feeling for it and about it, and make it his or her own. In The Reader, The Text, The Poem, Rosenblatt states,

> The ordinary reader who thinks his interpretation of The Tempest as 'good' as G.W. Knight's is...fatuous. Yet there is a sense in which his reading is indeed as good: drawing on the reservoir of his own past life and reading, he has lived through the experience himself, he has struggled to organize it, felt it in his own pulses. It is now part of the life experience with which he encounters the future (14).

Class or group discussion and analysis brings the student beyond his or her first reading: each "may learn...about others' experiences with the text;...may come to see that his own was confused or impoverished; (the student) may then be stimulated to attempt to call forth from the text a better poem. But this he must do himself." (Rosenblatt, Reader 45).

4. Certain conventions for reading literature do exist and can be learned.

As teachers we know that simply knowing the language is not enough to make someone an effective student of literature. What makes seniors better readers than freshmen? Is it maturity? Experience? Yes, but also learned techniques - whether they were learned intuitively as a survival skill or through more direct instruction. How much more effective readers they might be if certain techniques, "tricks of the trade," could be made obvious. Alan Purves offers several suggestions for incorporating a response-based approach that also enables students to be better readers of literature. The curriculum, according to Purves, should 1) provide students with literary schemata, or models, to apply in the context of literature; 2) acknowledge affective responses and subject them to thorough analysis; 3) provide students with strategies for reading (for example, teach students that to find theme they might look at the narrator, title, structure, juxtapositions, etc., in a text) ("Putting" 234). Our approach of eliciting response and then teaching students to use models which allow for a variety of critical perspectives would seem to mesh with this strategy.

From Theory Into Practice

The classroom techniques below are ones I have adapted from various theorists. They have been helpful in making literature classes more response-centered and so, more meaningful. Once a student is engaged with a text, he or she will have questions about it, about characters, the author's choices, a number of things that can be the basis for discussion.

1. Keeping a response journal.

Several response theorists including David Bleich and Russell Hunt suggest that writing responses to a text can be helpful to a student. The journal can be as structured, the entries as guided or as open-ended as you want, depending on the students, their previous experience with journals, the demands of the text, the purpose of the lesson, the predisposition of the teacher. One way to introduce the idea in class is to read aloud from the work being considered, stopping at appropriate places (usually every several paragraphs). When the reading stops, students write their reactions to what they've heard. The writing can take any form - summary, prediction, comment, association, question. Then students are asked to share what they have written.

Three purposes are served by this activity: 1) students formulate their own response to a text, thereby becoming engaged in the work; 2) a common basis for understanding can be established at the beginning of a work; 3) any important questions about details, or problems of understanding can be answered or solved. While reading the rest of the work, students continue to use the journals. For some assignments, I have followed a suggestion made by Russell Hunt in his article "Toward a Process-Intervention Model in Literature Teaching". Students are given questions to answer when they've reached a particular place in the text. The questions are aimed at eliciting a personal response, predicting an outcome - in other words, making the reading more experiential. Often, I have asked students to

stop and respond in their own manner at particular places; other times, the entries are recorded only when the student wishes, or feels compelled to.

The journals help to make students more aware of the text as an experience, rather than as something to be consumed as a way to get to the ending. Journals may serve as source books for discussion, as they were when the work was introduced; the kinds of questions raised in the journals might lead students toward a particular critical approach or model (see following chapters); or ideas, recorded briefly as journal entries might be expanded and elaborated on in a more analytical or interpretive essay.

2. Deciding literary importance.

David Bleich, in his book Readings and Feelings, suggests that students be asked to choose what they believe to be the most important word, sentence, passage, or aspect of a text and explain their reasons for the choice. Although Bleich's subjective approach to teaching literature may go beyond the comfort zone of some teachers, I have found this particular technique to be very effective. It opens discussion immediately because in order to answer the question, students have had to make some sense of the text. Students who are sure they've picked the word that is the "right answer" are always amazed at the variety of answers arising from their peers, which leads to some interesting discussion. The technique also helps those students who rarely do have the "right answer" in other situations or classes to feel more confident in their reading, at least. That confidence leads to commitment, which leads to skill.

3. Focusing on the reading process.

Russell Hunt offers several practical suggestions for raising students' awareness of a text and so enhancing their response to it. Two more of his ideas are included here:

A. Give students original and rewritten editions of a work and ask them to evaluate each. A recent AP test question was based on just such a technique, using two versions of D.H. Lawrence's poem, "Piano." I like handing this question to my students at the beginning of the year. Invariably, students say that the better poem is better because it lets them use their own imaginations whereas the other poem's multiple images and strings of adjectives leave nothing for the reader to do. This exercise has worked with several levels of high school student, not just the upper-level seniors.

B. Another suggestion made by Hunt is reminiscent of "cloze" procedure: Ask students to supply missing words or sentences or paragraphs in a text and to give reasons for their choices.

4. Raising questions.

In Literature as Exploration Louise Rosenblatt suggests that literary study should originate from students' questions about a text. I usually ask students to record any questions they have as they read and we use these as the beginning of discussion. Rather than introducing a novel with a lecture on the author and the historical context, I wait until questions of that sort arise. At that point only is it important and worthwhile to students to have the information. Usually students ask questions about significant aspects of the text, and then we apply other methods of literary analysis - such as formalist or psychological models - for an interpretation. This approach may seem a little unstructured to a teacher used to asking her own questions or to someone who relies on the ones in the teaching guide, but the slightly uneasy feeling doesn't last long when you see students actually interested in finding answers to questions that are meaningful to them because they are their own.

A Sample Lesson

What follows is the beginning of a lesson on Swift's "A Modest Proposal" designed for use with an advanced group of eleventh grade students. Teaching satire effectively can be a challenge: that fine line between the real and the absurd upon which the satirist perches is, even for adults, often difficult to detect; for students it can mean a near disaster. As a way of introducing the genre and this particularly bitter yet effect example, reader-response techniques are invaluable. To help students unlock the complexities of Swift's essay, I use the following procedure.

Students are given a copy of the first part of the essay (their copy ends with "especially in winter"). I want them to see the words as they hear them because for many, Swift's diction and sentence structure are difficult but not impossible. Seeing the words and phrases as one hears them spoken seems to help. We will read the text in sections (teacher reads aloud as students follow along) and students will be asked to respond at various places throughout the selection prior to discussion. The responses they write should answer the questions, who is the narrator? What is he like? What do you think of him? What will probably come next? The reading is divided into sections; the first one ends at the end of the third paragraph, the next after the fifth paragraph of the essay, then after the eighth, and the tenth. By breaking up the reading experience in this way - responding, writing, discussing, section-by-section - I have enabled students to follow more closely Swift's choices regarding the narrator. At first this narrator seems logical and reasonable and students see that. Not all of them see the change in diction in the second section because they are prepared to accept what this reasonable speaker will say. However, since we discuss their reactions at the end of each section, all students soon are aware of Swift's game and are ready to play it, to watch the narrator in action. Without this discussion, too many students miss the point.

Students are by the end of the tenth paragraph in control of the idea of this essay, and they are ready to go to their textbooks and finish the essay for homework. There is no wasted time in the next class explaining what the essay was really about - they have discovered it on their own already, and so they've also experienced part of the fun of satire: that superior feeling it bestows on the reader who "gets it."

Because reader-response is a way into a work, a means, not an end, the rest of the lesson will be a formalist exploration of the techniques Swift employed to create his effect and a look at the historical-cultural context of the essay. This lesson is no different from a more traditional approach, except that it began with readers' reactions and questions. And that makes the difference between just another literature class and a lesson that really works.

Why Bother?

David Bleich reminds us that all of our most memorable experiences are those which were in some way emotionally significant (Readings and Feelings 1). Techniques based on response theory are products of that belief and can have important effects in the classroom. Learning becomes more student-centered, as lessons evolve from students' reactions to a work; so, literary study becomes more rewarding for students; therefore, it is more enjoyable. Their personal engagement with a text can lead to a greater understanding of themselves and the world.

Most students have learned the education game all too well. Most are willing to jump through any hoops we set up in the form of study questions, research questions, group questions, essay questions - knowing all along that their teacher will provide any necessary answers after it's over and before the test. And so they lack commitment. Instead, they might enjoy a different game, the one Wolfgang Iser describes, in which the text is "an arena in which the author and reader participate in a game of the imagination" ("Reading" 51).

If you have found that too many lessons end with a vague sense of dissatisfaction both for students and teacher, if part of your dissatisfaction is that too often you're the one who lectures on the theme of the book at the end of the discussion, then trying some reader-response techniques might be a way out of the dilemma. You may find that you are soon turning more and more control of the discussion over to students. The following chapters will suggest methods that enable students to initiate and participate in such discussions successfully. Although this approach may take a little more or a different kind of planning on the part of the teacher, we have found that stimulating discussions and enthusiastic students can be the results.

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## Formalist Criticism in the Secondary Classroom

Roseanne DeFabio

I think perhaps the common, and comforting, response of all teachers reading this volume will be, "But I do that already." That was certainly the experience of those of us who set out in 1983 to demonstrate that the conscious application of multiple critical approaches to literature would turn our students into competent, independent critical thinkers. With few exceptions, each critical approach we tried seemed familiar, and we recognized that we had, in fact, been doing similar things in our classrooms for years. This was most evident, of course, in our experience with formalist criticism. From the beginning, we recognized that formalist criticism was the approach with which we were most familiar and most comfortable. A variety of factors, including the influence of the New Critics on our own education and the design of our textbooks, had conspired to make us, to varying degrees, formalists. And so with the formalist approach, even more than with any of the others, we were led to the question, "How is what I am doing now different from what I have always done?"

The main difference I find in my classroom is that I now try to turn over control of the material and the critical tools more completely to the students. I have moved from a method in which the teacher decided what questions must be asked about a text and what critical apparatus used to make some sense of it, to one in which the students raise the questions and find and apply critical tools which will enable them to answer those questions. This method requires that the students become aware of the nature of their own questions about literature.

One category of questions which emerges from the students' reading of literature is the group of questions related to how the work of art is put together. When readers focus on structural and textual properties of a work of art, they are

addressing formalist concerns. A fuller and more conscious awareness of what those concerns are and how they can be addressed will make the students more successful interpreters.

Formalist Theory

Cleanth Brooks has outlined some "articles of faith" that are useful to the teacher and students in defining the concerns of formalism. According to Brooks, some basic tenets of formalism are:

> That literary criticism is a description and evaluation of its object
>
> That the primary concern of criticism is with the problem of unity - the kind of whole which the literary work forms or fails to form, and the relation of the various parts to each other in building up this whole
>
> That in a successful work, form and content cannot be separated
>
> That form is meaning
>
> That literature is ultimately metaphorical and symbolic.

There are other articles in Brook's list, but these have proved most useful in the classroom. These distinctions may seem too difficult for secondary students to understand, but they will become clearer in meaning to the students as they gain experience in studying the form of literary works. As a beginning point, it is probably enough to suggest to students that having in mind the basic questions of the formalists will help them find a way into the literary text. These basic questions, according to Guerin, are:

1. What is the literary work?
2. What are its shape and effect?
3. How do these come about?

The effect of these questions is to send the reader back to the text for answers. The "close reading" which the reader then makes of the text is the primary method of formalist criticism.

Close reading is an invaluable tool for students of literature. It begins with the meanings of specific words (both connotative and denotative meanings) and proceeds through an investigation of the ways in which specific elements of the work relate to each other until the underlying form emerges, the form which harmonizes all the diverse elements. As students gain experience with close reading, they discover that the form of the literary work is intricately related with its meaning.

In addition to the general principles of formalist criticism and the technique of close reading, a familiarity with the "fallacies" defined by the formalists may also be useful to students. Concerned as they are with the work of art as a "self-sufficient entity constituted by its parts in their internal relations" (Abrams), the formalists regard as invalid any concern with matters extrinsic to the work. Therefore, they warn against four fallacies in reading a literary work. They are:

1. Intentional fallacy which attempts to discover the author's motives or feelings.
2. Affective fallacy in which readers project their own feelings onto the work.
3. Genetic fallacy which is concerned with the source of the work.
4. Ideological fallacy which considers ideas as pre-eminent.

For the formalist each of these fallacies presents the danger of taking the reader away from the "poem qua poem" into other areas - biography, psychology, philosophy, etc.

It is difficult to say precisely how the students gain an understanding of formalism or the ability to apply formalist concepts and techniques in the classroom. In each classroom the process may differ. It may even be different for individuals within the same class. Some classes or individuals may purposely study other formalist critics in order to understand the theory fully; others may never even identify the critical approach by name, but will be satisfied with the

distinction that one way of approaching a literary work is by investigating questions as to how it is made. There are, however, some common classroom procedures that I follow with this critical approach as well as with the others.

Starting With Student Responses

It is essential to me that students start analysis of literature from questions raised by their own reading. A general classroom procedure is to have the students record their own responses to a work in a response journal before any class discussion of the work takes place. Louise Rosenblatt, in The Reader, The Text, The Poem, says, "Only a reader in aesthetic transaction with the text can synthesize the parts into a 'whole' or structure which is a work of art" (p. 90). Therefore, according to Rosenblatt, for a formalist analysis it is essential first to provide opportunity for an "aesthetic transaction." Focus on this dynamic transaction of the reader with the text makes it clear that the form or unity of the text that emerges is the result of the reader's activities "under the stimulus and guidance of the text" (Rosenblatt, p. 91).

It is true that "under the stimulus of the text" the student reader will produce assertions and questions about the literary work, and he/she will be driven back to the text in each instance. On the one hand, he/she will go back to the text to find evidence to support his/her assertions in order to convince other readers of the validity of those assertions. On the other hand, the student will return to the text to seek answers for the questions he/she must solve to find meaning. When these questions pertain to the way in which the work is put together, the student is engaged in a formalist analysis whether he/she realizes it or not.

Often the student will need to find an interpretive paradigm, called here a "critical model", which will help him/her to solve the questions raised by the text. In my classroom it is most common for students with similar questions about the text to work together in groups. Together they try to find and apply specific critical models which will help them answer these questions.

## Finding and Applying Critical Models

I have discovered that an effective way to help students develop a critical repertoire is to supply them with a wide selection of models in the form of charts, diagrams, outlines, etc., that provide conceptual frameworks that will help unlock meaning. All of the critical approaches discussed in this volume (Historical/ Cultural, Psychological, Archetypal, as well as Formalist) have within them an unlimited number of possible models which the student may find helpful. It is up to the teacher to find those most appropriate for her class and for the particular questions they are investigating. In the formalist approach the model might be a chart of the conventional metrical patterns and rhyme schemes for English and Italian sonnets, or an outline of elements of the short story, or a description of stock characters for a drama, and so on.

Many times the students working together will be able to find for themselves a suitable model for their purpose from those they have used in past reading experiences. Other times they will discover that they are up against something new and unfamiliar to them, and they will turn to their teacher to help them find the tool they need. I think the important point to be made is that the teacher supplies the model for the students in response to such a plea, not the answer to the question or the interpretation of the work. For example, a group of students trying to understand the tone of Sophocles' Oedipus Rex might need an outline of the types of irony in order to discover how this element contributes to the total effect of the tragedy. Another group, puzzled by the characters in "Young Goodman Brown", might require a definition and some examples of allegory in order to discover the significance of the characters and their contributions to the underlying meaning of the tale.

In every case, when the students go back to the text, they are looking for textual evidence that will support the application of the specific interpretive

model to the text. After weighing the evidence among the members of the group, the group will come up with an interpretive statement that explains elements of the text from the perspective of the model they applied. The group in the example above working on the tone of Oedipus Rex will formulate an explanation of the irony in the play that includes specific examples of each of the types of irony they found operating. These interpretive statements are presented to the rest of the class in the general discussion.

Synthesis of Group Findings

When all the groups come together with the reports of their investigations of the text, the class will take all the individual group interpretations and attempt to synthesize them into a unified interpretation of the work. This process involves many higher level thinking skills including comprehension of the various perspectives, evaluation of the scope and depth of each perspective, analysis of the relationships among all of the perspectives given by the groups, and the recognition and resolution of resulting ambiguities.

The question I most commonly ask my students at this point and which I encourage them to ask each other is "So what?". Students must realize that it is not enough to recognize a significant question about a text, or even enough to analyze that specific element, but in the final stage they must be able to show how that element contributes to the meaning of the text as a whole. The group in the earlier example who analyzed the allegorical significance of characters in "Young Goodman Brown" can not be satisfied with producing an outline of the individual characters and the abstract concepts which they represent, but they must show how this element of allegory combines with other aspects of the story to create its meaning.

**Writing At Every Step**

One aspect of the procedure for classroom interpretation of literature that I have not mentioned is the importance of writing at every step of the process.

As mentioned earlier, the student's initial response to the work is a written one. In actual practice I often have my students writing in preparation for reading a piece before the work or its author is even mentioned in class. I owe many of the techniques I have found for incorporating writing exercises into the teaching of literature to Charles Moran's article "Teaching Writing/Teaching Literature" which appeared in College Composition and Communication (February, 1981). I recommend this article as a source of fine practical suggestions for the classroom teacher.

The writing assignments for a typical literature lesson might include:

1. Pre-reading writing in which the students attempt to use a writing technique that they will encounter in the text. This exercise predisposes the students to notice and accept particular aspects of the text which may be problematic. For example, in preparation for Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, I have my students experiment with stream-of-consciousness writing and with the use of different narrative devices for the description of a childhood experience.
2. Response writing. Though this is a less formal type of writing and may take whatever form the student chooses, it is essential to me that the student's response be a written one.
3. Analytical writing which comes out of the group investigation of the particular questions raised in the students' responses. This writing may be a collaborative effort of the group as a whole, but as with the response writing, it is essential that the group findings be written. This forces precision and agreement among the members rather than an unstructured oral report of their observations.

4. Interpretive writing. As a final step in interpretation, it is important that each student be able to demonstrate an understanding of the meaning of the work by restating the work in his/her own symbols. This resymbolization most often takes the form of an interpretive essay. However, sometimes I allow the students to demonstrate an understanding of the text by producing a similar fictive piece or by using another art form such as dance, sculpture, music, or graphic art.

The process I have described for classroom application of formalist criticism can apply to the use of the other critical approaches as well. The main advantage I find in formalist analysis in the classroom is that the concerns and techniques of the formalists send the students back to the text to find meaning. The students discover through close reading that structure and meaning are inseparable, and they recognize an understanding of the text and its elements as an important beginning in the process of critical interpretation of literature. In seeing the understanding of form as a beginning rather than the end of the critical process, I acknowledge a departure from the pure formalism represented by the New Critics. For my students the greatest satisfaction seems to come when cultural, psychological, and archetypal considerations are investigated in conjunction with formalist elements to understand the work with all its personal and cultural richness.

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## A Formalist Lesson Plan for Salinger's "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" Used With Advanced Seventh Grades

Mark McKay

Formalist critics like Cleanth Brooks and I. A. Richards write about the "ideal reader" who can discern the true meaning of a piece of literature. "There is no ideal reader, of course," Brooks says in "The Formalist Critic", but I think we teachers of English can make our students and ourselves better readers by working through the process of a close formalist reading with them.

J. D. Salinger's short story "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" has provided my students and me with stimuli for many minutes of thoughtful discussion of psychology, mythology, history, and religion, but the key that allows us passage to those areas is our close reading of the work itself. In the following lesson plan, I attempt to go from a general discussion of the interaction of structure and purpose in common man-made objects, to a close examination of the interaction of structure and purpose in a specific man-made object, Salinger's short story. This lesson plan could be used with many tightly-structured, ambiguous pieces of fiction.

Day 1: I divide my class into five groups, each of which will be examining a common man-made object, for example, a desk, a chair, a pencil, a broom, and a bell. Each group is given twenty-five to thirty-five minutes to perform the following three tasks: 1.) Write a paragraph explanation of what your object is. Pretend that this is aimed at a being who has never seen the object. What are its parts? How do the parts fit/work together? Where does it come from? 2.) Write down an explanation of the function/purpose of the object. 3.) Write down an explanation of how the object's structure contributes to its function.

During the remainder of the class period, a reporter from each group reads its explanations. When all groups have reported, we discuss the ancient Greek ideas of Materialism, which defines objects with reference to their matter, and Teleology, in which objects are defined in terms of function or purpose. I explain to my students that these two ways of looking at a thing are not contradictory; they are just two ways of looking at an object in order to understand it. By the end of the period, we usually have a mutual understanding of how structure and purpose are often tied closely together in man-made objects.

Day 2: I start this period by presenting the idea that a piece of writing is a man-made object. I then ask the students to brainstorm, as a class, the materials and techniques that a writer uses to make a story (10-15 minutes). Usually, the students start out with the obvious answers: paper, pen, pencil, eraser, typewriter, word processor, etc. Then I say something like: "Instead of looking at the building blocks of writing as a process in general, let's look at the building blocks of a story. Once a writer has her preferred writing implements, what else does the writer need to create a story?" Student answers at this point might include: words, sentences, paragraphs, ideas, dialogue, description. I then ask them: "What are the parts of a story that we've been discussing in class this year?" They answer with story components such as: plot, complications, climax, resolution, setting, conflict, point-of-view, foreshadowing, style, tone, moment-of-illumination, etc.

Once we've filled the board with the story writer's tools, I tell the students that we are now going to look at how J. D. Salinger uses these tools in his story, "A Perfect Day for Bananafish".

Since Salinger has broken this story into three sections, I have the students read one section at a time. We start reading the first section aloud in class and the assignment is to finish reading the section and then to do a writing assignment. This writing exercise helps the students to focus in on the main characters, to see

how Salinger shows characters, and prepares the students for the next day's discussion of point of view.

Assignment: Up to this point we have been introduced to Seymour Glass through what his wife and mother-in-law say about him in their phone conversation. Look back through their conversation and find any mentions of Seymour. Then write a personality description of Seymour based on his wife and mother-in-law's statements. (Tomorrow we will share descriptions, then read on to see Seymour in action with a young friend.) The questions listed below might help you in writing your description:

1. Who is this person?
2. How does he behave?
3. What is important to him?
4. Would you like him as a friend?

Write a well-organized paragraph description of Seymour. Do not just answer the questions.

Day 3: During the first half of this period, we share the character descriptions and discuss Seymour's "reputation". Most of my students have no problem figuring out that Seymour has had psychiatric problems even after being released from an Army hospital. I ask them to back up their assertions with specific passages from the text. Once we have come to a consensus on Seymour's reputation in the first section of the story, we discuss Salinger's technique of characterization. I ask them: "How is Salinger characterizing Seymour so far? By narrator? By character's thoughts? By character's speech? By character's actions?" They tell me that Seymour is described only by the two characters speaking by phone, his wife Muriel and her mother. I say: "So we are seeing Seymour through what his wife and mother-in-law say about him on the phone, through their points-of-view. What is the narrator's point of view?" Most of my

students will see that the story is written in the third person, but the differences between omniscient, limited, and objective points of view are tough-going for them. Earlier in the year, I have given my students an assignment which has them take a newspaper description of an event and rewrite it from omniscient and limited points of view. I ask them to think back to that assignment and decide which of the three viewpoints has been used by Salinger. Eventually, we agree that the story has been written from an objective (no viewpoint) point of view.

During the remainder of this class, we start the second section together. Their assignment is to finish reading the section and to do the following writing.

Assignment: Write the final page of "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" based on everything you know about Seymour up to this point. (Minimum - one page.)

Day 4: During the first half of this period, students share their story endings and discuss the differences/similarities. We then read the final two pages of the story together. Every time I have done this assignment, at least one student has written an ending quite similar to Salinger's, but, still, many students are puzzled by Seymour's suicide. Because of the ambiguous nature of the story, many of my students comment that "this story is weird!", or "I don't understand this story at all!" or "Why does Seymour kill himself?" At this point, I suggest, "I think if we go back and look closely at the words on the pages, the story should explain itself. We will see if we can figure out the story's meaning by looking at how it has been put together. Tomorrow we will divide into groups which will look at specific components of the story."

Day 5: I divide the class into groups which are given specific elements of the story to examine closely. They are asked to take notes on their findings and report these to the class. I generate the group topics out of their brainstormed ideas from Day 2. Here are some possible group activities which are designed to get the students to reexamine the text.

Group 1: Setting - Go back through the whole story and list all words or phrases that tell you something about the setting - time and place. List vivid images that the author uses in order to set the scene. Show how the main characters fit or do not fit into this setting. Do the characters seem happy or comfortable in this setting? How does the setting contribute to or contrast with the characters' emotions?

Group 2: Characterization - Examine Salinger's characterization of Muriel Glass. List specific actions that you find Muriel doing in the story. What do these actions tell you about her character? Using the text, write a summary of Muriel's character.

Group 3: Characterization - Same as group 2, substituting Seymour for Muriel. Why do you think Salinger chose the name Seymour for this character?

Group 4: Characterization - Same as group 2, substituting Sybil for Muriel. Why do you think Salinger chose the name Sybil for this character?

Group 5: Plot - Make a list of the major plot incidents. Notice that the story is divided into three sections. Put the incidents into the appropriate sections. What differentiates each section? Does there seem to be a pattern involved? What purpose does this serve in the story?

Group 6: Theme - The title of this story refers to a story within the story which Seymour tells Sybil. What seems to be the main idea of the bananafish story? How does this story relate to the story as a whole?

Day 6: During the group work on day 5, the students were taking the story apart. On this day I attempt to reconstruct the story with them. I start this period by having Group 6 report their findings on the theme of the bananafish story within a story. The students usually have no problem coming up with the themes of greed and selfishness, but they usually have a tough time figuring out how this relates to the rest of the story. I tell them that if they listen very carefully to their

classmates' discussions of setting, characterization, and plot, they should see some connections.

I then have the rest of the group reporters read their findings and after each report, we brainstorm connections with the story within a story. When Group 1 reports on the details of setting, we relate the post Miami Beach resort, post-war setting to the bananafish story themes. When Groups 2, 3, and 4 report on their details of characterization, we discuss their relationships with the setting and their connection to the bananafish themes. We also have an interesting time figuring out why Salinger chose those characters' names.

Before I ask Group 5 to report, I refer back to Day 1's activities on structure and purpose in man-made objects. I tell the class that Group 5 will be reporting on the structure of this story and that after listening to their report we will attempt to figure out answers to the fundamental questions of the story, such as: "Why does Seymour commit suicide?" and, ultimately, "Why does this story seem to have been written?"

"A Perfect Day for Bananafish" is a story rich enough in meaning to be discussed further in terms of its historical cultural, psychological, and mythological significances. Yet, in order to explore these areas, students must first deal with the text on its own terms, in a formalist manner.

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## A Formalist Lesson:

## "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner"

Carol Forman

As you know from the introductory chapter on Formalism, the Formalists contend that each work of art is unique because of the unique interaction of parts to the whole. A teacher may well question, therefore, whether there is such a thing as a formalist pedagogy.

One thing we can do with students is to demonstrate how a reader does a "close reading" of a text and then encourage them to begin to follow their reader response text with that close reading. A common complaint of students asked to do a close reading is, "I don't know what to look for."

Very often students, as naive readers, need to be reminded that each genre has its own "grammar" or set of structural elements. Once a student knows the common structural elements of, for example, the short story--plot, setting, point-of-view, etc.--the student can begin his/her close reading of any particular short story by looking FOR and AT those elements. Once a student knows what there is in a particular work, that student can begin to look at how those elements fit together and to see more clearly the work's significant form.

What follows is a lesson designed to take students through a close reading of a poem, "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner" by Randall Jarrell and, hopefully, to a better understanding of how the elements of this particular poem work to make meaning.

The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner
Randall Jarrell

From my mother's sleep I fell into the State
And I hunched in its belly till my wet fur froze.
Six miles from earth, loosed from its dream of life,
I woke to black flak and the nightmare fighters.
When I died they washed me out of the turret with a hose.

The teacher might begin class by having a member of the class read the poem aloud. After a few moments of discussion in which students explain their initial responses to the poem, the teacher might suggest that there are many aspects of the poem working together to provoke the strong and divergent reactions evident in the class responses.

At this point the teacher should divide the class into four groups. Each group should be asked to focus on one aspect of the poem -- imagery, syntax, rhythm or tone. The groups might start their study with one of the following sets of questions about the poem. (The teacher might decide to use the entire set as a worksheet "model" of the kinds of questions one might ask in a close reading or to give each group only the questions dealing with the specific topic.)

Imagery

List the images in the poem.

Does there appear to be a relationship between and among the images?

Is there a distinguishable image pattern?

Syntax

Look at the pronouns in the poem and determine all the possible referents for each one. (If different referents change the meaning of the sentence, explain those changes.)

What is the effect of the speaker's finishing a line which begins, "When I died..."?

Are there any ambiguous syntactical constructions?

Rhythm

Is there any identifiable metric foot?

Which words receive stress?

Are there any repeated words which never receive stress?

What sounds conflict with or serve to emphasize the meanings of the words?

**Tone**

What words contribute to the nightmare tone?

What or who is the source of the nightmare? Is there more than one possibility?

What does the attitude of the speaker toward his own death seem to be?

After the students have had sufficient time to work--the remainder of the class period might be enough time--the class should come back together so that each group can report on its findings. If the teacher has used the entire set of questions as a worksheet, students might find it useful at this point to jot notes on the findings of other groups.

The group reporting on the imagery in the poem will undoubtedly focus on the ambiguity in the use of birth imagery to describe an air battle. Birth is supposed to be creative, yet each successive birth of the speaker is from the State through six miles of flak, and from the turret with a hose.

The image of the "womb" of the State is a hostile one; the speaker freezes there and is delivered six miles from earth. This imagery is juxtaposed with the imagery of the wet fur, suggesting that the second birth is more like the birth of an animal or an embryo than a human. The last "birth" suggests dismemberment, bleeding--possibly even an abortion. Students will probably see in this progression the dehumanization of the speaker (from man to animal to formlessness) in the image patterns of successive rebirths.

Students who are studying the syntax of the poem will probably focus on the pronouns. The "I" pronoun is used in four of the five lines, emphasizing the personal nature of the address. The use of the active voice in combination with the repeated first person singular pronouns suggests that the speaker was forced to participate in the events of the poem alone. Because the speaker finishes the line which begins, "When I died...", the reader knows that the speaker is telling the

poem from a point removed. They will probably feel that the construction adds a kind of credibility to the tone of the poem because the speaker is "on the other side" of the experience.

The use of the neuter "its" in reference to the State suggests the lack of humanness and humanity. The antecedent for the second "its" in the third line is unclear: does the dream of life belong to the State or to the earth? Students will want to discuss the implications of each possible interpretation.

Another ambiguous syntactical construction is "nightmare fighters". Are the fighters in the nightmare or are they fighting the nightmare? The ambiguity suggests that the speaker is not quite sure who or what the enemy is, and the question underscores the meaninglessness of the destruction.

Students working on the rhythm of the poem will find no identifiable metric foot. Because the rhythm is unpredictable, the reader gets a sense that things in the poem are unpredictable--out of control.

The word "I" is repeated four times in the poem, yet it is never emphasized. When students discuss the relationships of all of their findings, they will not have trouble seeing the relationship of the unstressed "I" to the other elements which stress the dehumanization of the speaker.

There is emphasis created with one syllable words on the phrases "wet fur froze" and "with a hose"--the two most repulsive images. There is special emphasis on the word "fur" as one anticipates a non-accented beat, but the semantic sense of the sentence demands the accent. "Hose" is emphasized again by the rhyme with froze, as it is the only end rhyme in the poem.

Students who look specifically at tone will look at the elements in the poem which contribute to the nightmare quality. One is diction. The words "fell," "loosed," "dream," "nightmare" and the like suggest things out of control. The final verb suggests a cleaning up of the mess of the chaos: "washed me out of the turret with a hose."

Other images work to suggest things as they should not be. For example, the speaker is born not from the mother's womb, but from the mother's sleep. Has her unconsciousness allowed this to happen, or is she such a hostile mother that she has dreamed all this for him? The second birth occurs six miles from earth. Some students may suggest that it is possible to push the mother/earth connection and to see a parallel nightmare of being cut off from the maternal connotations of earth. They may also see a connection with the "its dream of life" ambiguity mentioned before. If the "it" refers to the earth, then the suggestion is that life is the illusion, the dream, while death is the reality. This irony is the stuff of nightmares.

The poem ends with the line which begins, "When I died..." The speaker is, as we have said before, outside of the experience. He seems resigned to the terrors inflicted on him. Students might question whether when one accepts horrors, one lives in a nightmare.

Students will want to discuss the relationships of the various elements after each group reports. Students should be encouraged to suggest and discuss the connections they see and the implications and/or effects of those connections. For example, once each group has reported, students will not have trouble seeing a relationship between the image pattern of successive degenerative rebirths, the effect of the unstressed "I" and the nightmare tone.

Students will also see the "formalist truths" such as that a thematic paraphrase like "war dehumanizes" is an inadequate substitute for all that is "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner".

In addition, if this exercise is followed by another which asks students to look at the same elements in a very different poem, they will begin to see that beginning a textual study by looking <u>for</u> and <u>at</u> the elements of the genre is generally an effective interpretive procedure.

**Possible follow-up writing assignments:**

1. Write a newspaper account of the events described in "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner" from the point of view of someone who watched them occur from the ground. Follow the report with a brief discussion of what in the poem was difficult or impossible to get into the story.
2. Write two accounts of a single incident or two descriptions of a single place from the point of view of two different people. Give a brief description of each speaker before you begin.
3. Write a poem in which meaning is created through the repetition of a word or phrase in several different contexts.

Introduction to Historical/Cultural Methods of

Literary Inquiry and Instruction

Marjorie Kelley

Historical/cultural literary criticism is an approach to literature which can help students to develop interpretive skills, and, thus, should be used in the teaching of literature on the secondary level. This essay explores what historical/cultural literary criticism is; it presents reasons why this literary approach should be used in the classroom, and this essay examines some techniques for using a historical/cultural stance in illuminating literature.

Awareness of cultural and historical influences on literature is often essential if a reader is to understand a piece of literature. However, this awareness is not the sole means of interpreting a given work, nor is it a key that unlocks every piece of literature. Historical/cultural interpretations should be used selectively as the literature under examination may demand.

It is wrong to assure that every piece of literature may be unraveled by historical/cultural investigations. However, many pieces of literature must be approached from an historical/cultural perspective.

For example, without some awareness of 18th century London and its French counterpart, Chapter 1 of A Tale of Two Cities would be virtually incomprehensible to most readers. Clearly a reader must possess some historical/cultural (including philosophic) background concerning the setting if he or she is to proceed to Chapter 2 of Dickens' novel with some understanding. Although it is not necessary to be a Jacobian studies expert to read A Tale of Two Cities with understanding and enjoyment, it is crucial for the reader to be aware in some way of the historical and cultural influences around which the plot revolves and within which characters are meshed. Dickens presents cultural/historical hurdles in

Chapter 1 and throughout this novel which can cause any reader to stumble and forever close this book. Teachers on the secondary level can help students over these hurdles and into understanding by doing two things: first of all, a teacher can help a student recognize the existence and importance of these hurdles by asking and by encouraging questions as well as by supplying appropriate historical and cultural information to students; secondly, through a variety of methods, including pre- and post-reading exercises, a teacher can help a student achieve some level of understanding by making connections between historical/cultural facts concerning the setting presented in A Tale of Two Cities.

To understand A Tale of Two Cities, it is not necessary that a reader be able to draw George III's face "with his large jaw," but it is helpful for a reader to know who George III, his wife, and his French counterparts were. For without some historical/cultural background, a reader may close A Tale of Two Cities before reaching its third paragraph.

It is not necessary for a reader to be able to expound forever on the minute political and social differences between 1775 England and France in order to understand Sidney Carton's sacrifice. However, some knowledge of the political and social differences between the England and the France of this novel is useful background for a reader to connect and grasp if an understanding of the significance of Carton's actions is to be achieved.

It is clear to teachers of literature at any level that outside knowledge of a historical/cultural nature must be presented to readers if certain literary works are to be understood. However, modern historical/cultural literary criticism does not solely investigate the confines of a time, place, people, and world being depicted in a piece of literature. The historical/cultural literary critic of today is also keenly aware of the importance of the historical/cultural background of the author and of the reader. The historical/cultural literary critic of today recognizes the need to

investigate relevant facts concerning an author as well as the need to study and to understand the background of the reader who must connect in some way with a piece of literature for its meaning to be unraveled.

A reader does not dwell in a vacuum. Today's literary critics recognize this when studying literature from a historical/cultural perspective. Thus, teachers also need to be aware of the background of a reader presenting a piece of literature. Teachers of literature must seek ways to parallel the historical/cultural significance of a literary work and its author with the significance of a reader's background.

It is in the light of literary scholars' growing awareness of the importance of what a reader brings to a text that classroom teachers must work to help students read with understanding. The teacher who recognizes the importance of historical/cultural literary criticism must recognize that historical/cultural literary criticism operates on many levels.

Teachers who merely present facts about the reality of a certain setting as well as those who couple awareness of a work's setting with details concerning an author's life are doing very little to foster the development of interpretive skills in their students. Teachers who merely present historical/cultural facts about the time and place of a literary piece as well as facts concerning the time, place, beginning, middle and end of an author are not developing cognitive skills in their students, and this is the primary goal of teaching literature.

In developing a reader's cognitive skills, it is useful to do what historical/cultural literary critics of today do. They operate on three distinct levels when investigating literature. Historical/cultural literary critics of today study: 1) the historical/cultural information pertinent to the setting of literature under investigation, 2) the historical/cultural influences affecting the author of a work, and 3) the impact of a reader's own history and culture on interpretations of a piece of literature.

Teachers of literature who recognize the need to apply the methods of historical/cultural literary criticism to the secondary classroom must be aware that this type of criticism concerns itself with the historical/cultural background of 1) the text, 2) the author, and 3) the reader.

For example, in presenting Harper Lee's To Kill A Mockingbird to group of students, a historical/cultural multi-dimensional approach is very useful. Students can be made aware that when reading this novel they should keep in mind multi-perspectives of time and place--their own, the author's (or, perhaps, in this case the narrator's), as well as the characters'. In doing so, a richer appreciation of the novel can be achieved.

To demonstrate historical/culturally oriented activities let us look at some activities which are pre-reading or introductory to this novel. These activities take approximately 4 to 6 forty minute class periods.

First of all, young readers seem to be able to recognize themselves most easily, and the first activity demonstrates as well as activates self-awareness. On day 1 of the pre-reading exercises designed to introduce To Kill A Mockingbird, students are instructed to define "history," and to hand in these definitions to their teacher with the knowledge that their definitions will be shared with the class. Recently a group of 11th grade students were given these directions. Their responses were:

"History is _____"

1. the study of things past.
2. things that happened before.
3. a bunch of bull crap that helps make me stay a junior even when I'm 18.
4. the most interesting subject in school.
5. a subject in school that investigates the past.
6. a science that ties the past to the present.
7. the study of where we come from.
8. the study of dead people.
9. an investigation which leads to ideas.
10. the account of wars and changes.
11. the story of famous people.

12. the study and memorization of dates, places, and people which have had effects on other places and people of other times.
13. something we used to do last year. Now we're doing government in social so I've forgot all about history.
14. something only boring people care about, not me.

These student responses were then read aloud. Still on the first day, students were presented with a list of more scholarly definitions gathered out of dictionaries and history texts by the teacher. These definitions included:

"History is _____"

1. a narrative of events connected with a real or imaginary object, person, or position, or the natural unfolding and interdependence of the events treated.

2. a systematic written account comprising a chronological record of events and usually including a philosophical explanation of the cause and origin of such events.

3. a branch of knowledge that records and explains past events as steps in the sequence of human activities.

4. a process and a product. It is a way to look at and to interpret past events as well as an account of such an investigation. It is the investigation and the report of that investigation.

5. a science. It is like looking into a mirror. We can only ever really see ourselves.

6. an art. It is the art of looking back so that we can look forward. It is a controlled expression of experience. Historians may use similar tools, but like sculptors recreating the same object, the final product of the tools will be as different as the artist who uses them.

7. an art that uses modern scientific methods of investigation.

8. the study and the interpretation of past events.

9. a report that tells us where we went wrong in the past so we don't make the same mistakes.

At the conclusion of day 1, students were instructed to write personal recollections, minimum length 50 words. Students were to write these recollections for homework, and they were told that these recollections would be read aloud on the following day by the teacher in class.

On day 2, the personal recollections were collected and then read aloud. In a group of English 11 students, interestingly, two students described a very similar event in which the other also took part. On day 3 of these activities, the two accounts were again read aloud and were closely examined. The two accounts were as follows:

> I remember when I was five. I was sitting out on my stoop with the tallest kid in our class. It was a very hot day in July and I just wanted to sit on my stoop. But Heath didn't. He ran and got his two wheeler which he had just learned to ride. His house was a few away from mine and I think that he wanted to show off. So, he charged out of his yard and headed down the hill, pumping and standing on his pedals. When he got near me on my stoop, he slammed the breaks on by stepping down. But he slipped. His fat foot hit the sidewalk and his bike spilled. He fell hard and scraped his arm and ran back to his mommy crying.
>
> ---John

> The funniest thing that I can remember is when I was pretty little. One day in the summer, John and I were riding our bikes up around our houses, and he was trying to pop a wheelie. He was going fast because even then he was a show-off. He went fast all right. He fell off his bike and kept rolling down the hill. His arm was cut up bad, and he went home crying. I stood there and laughed.
>
> ---Heath

After reading these accounts on day 3, students were then instructed to write down conclusions they had reached concerning historical accounts. They were reminded to think about the "expert" definitions they had been presented; they were reminded to think about their own definitions of history; they were reminded to think about their recorded recollections and our discussion concerning these recollections. These conclusions concerning history were written individually in class and collected at the end of day 3.

On day 4, the conclusions reached and written on the previous day were presented to the class by the teacher. These conclusions included:

1. History is looking at the past in such a way as to gather some information. This information helps to generate some kind of intellectual activity.

2. No two people look at the same thing in exactly the same way.

3. The conclusions a person reaches about information gathered in a historical investigation reveals as much about the investigator as it does about the subject being investigated.

4. When we look into our history to find its significance, we are really in search of our own significance.

5. An historian does these things: a) gathers information from a source, b) questions this information, c) tries to resolve these questions, d) draws conclusions based on this gathered information.

The conclusions reached and the activities preceding the conclusions generally attuned students to the strengths and weaknesses of personal recollections. This was essential since they were to face such recollections in To Kill A Mockingbird.

Also on day 4, the teacher presented a brief report on the facts concerning Harper Lee which were deemed relevant to the novel. The first 5 pages of the novel were then read aloud, and students were instructed to list 15 questions concerning the text for class on the next, the fifth day.

On day 5, questions were presented and answers provided by other students or the teacher. Unanswered questions were directed to history teachers outside of class; answers to these were presented on day 6.

On day 6 students also engaged in a comparative study of Scout's childhood time, Scout's adult time, and the reader's own time through a teacher-prepared worksheet. This worksheet included such exercises as:

Check the statements which are true:

_____ The narrator's adult time is around 1960.

_____ There are many differences between life in Alabama in 1960 and life in Alabama in 1933.

_____ Life in New York State today would seem very strange to 6 year old Scout Finch.

List the major characteristics of life today:

List the major characteristics of Scout's life in 1933:

List the major characteristics of Scout's life in 1960:

This worksheet was then discussed upon its completion in class.

Combining three levels of inquiry, students were introduced to To Kill A Mockingbird. Similar activities continued throughout class sessions dealing with the novel, as did activities which were generated from other critical schools such as that of the Formalists.

Teaching literature from historical/cultural stances is useful in leading students into and through literature. Insights can be generated by using this mode of inquiry. It is essential for the teacher of literature to remember that historical/cultural investigations are most complete when 3 dimensions of time form the vantage from which a piece of literature is examined in a historical/cultural light. These 3 dimensions are: 1) that of the work, 2) that of the author, and 3) that of the reader himself or herself.

An Historical-Cultural Approach to

"The Whole Town's Sleeping"

Jim Butterfield

Taught to a seventh-grade high-average class, this lesson involves an historical-cultural interpretation of a short story, "The Whole Town's Sleeping," by Ray Bradbury, from his book entitled Dandelion Wine.

Briefly, the story deals with a killer who preys on a small town on a hot summer night in 1928. Several women have been stalked and murdered by a mysterious killer whom the town has nicknamed "Lonely One." Lavinia Nebbs, a "maiden lady," refuses to be intimidated by the fear which has terrified the town and two of her friends, Helen and Francine. She insists that all three go to a movie, even though minutes earlier they had discovered the body of Lonely One's latest victim.

The following sequence of events leads the reader to the story's conclusion: after she and Francine find the body, Lavinia convinces her friend that they should continue on to the movies along with Helen whom they pick up at her house. All three stop by the drugstore where the druggist confesses to giving Lavinia's name and address to a stranger that afternoon, a man who had dropped in and remarked how pretty she was, after seeing her earlier. The three women continue on to the movies and leave about 11:30 p.m. They first walk Francine home, then Helen. Lavinia walks home after refusing offers to stay the night with both friends. While Lavinia walks, the story's suspense builds as she listens to the night sounds and comes across Officer Kennedy who offers to walk her home; a third time she refuses, not trusting any man since she does not know who the Lonely One might be.

Adding to the story's terror is a dark ravine that "cuts the town in two." This Lavinia must cross alone in order to get home. In total darkness she walks down the steps and convinces herself that someone is following her. She listens, her heart starts pounding, fear sets in, and she begins running for her life while hearing sounds behind her. She runs ... runs up the hill toward the street to her house and safety. Lavinia barely manages to put the key in the lock, opens, slams, and locks the door - safe at last. Then she realizes that she is not alone in her house; somewhere behind her in the darkness "...someone cleared his throat."

The preceding summary will be helpful for teachers who are unfamiliar with the story, but it is not given to students. The following activities are designed as a pre-reading exercise for students before they encounter the story. The activities will establish concepts that will aid students' understanding of the story.

To obtain an idea of seventh-graders' knowledge of history, the class defines the term in their own words. Finally the dictionary is consulted, and that definition is then written on the board with the students' responses. The term remains throughout the lesson's duration. The class then plays a game in which each student places a number of items in historical order. Each student receives a sheet with the following headings written across the top:

| Wars | Chronological or Historical order | Year(s) | Cultural Items(s) |
|---|---|---|---|

Seven wars are listed randomly in the "wars" column: Korean War, American Civil War, Vietnam Conflict, War of 1812, World War I, American Revolution, and World War II. In the next column the students are asked to place the wars in correct historical order. Once arranged, the students must assign one year to each war. For example, any year from 1963 to 1975 is acceptable for Vietnam. Next students are asked to associate any item - object, person, anything cultural - to that period of history. Students may list more than one item, and they may rely on movies and television to supply historical reality. Answers provide an interesting insight into

seventh-grade knowledge of history and what these people are aware of culturally. The sheets are collected, and responses listed on the board. Through a diversity of answers, the class begins to see a variety of cultural elements that history produces.

Once this pre-reading activity is completed, Bradbury's story is introduced as a mystery story that involves a particular time. The first few pages are read aloud (up to the discovery of the body in the ravine). Nothing of an historical nature is mentioned (at this point it is more essential for the class to be gripped by the story's incidents). The group is then asked to read the rest of the story independently. The next day a general discussion of the story takes place in class. Questions applying to plot, characterization, and literal understanding of the story are discussed.

The class is then divided into small groups, each assigned to re-read a section of the story. A group secretary notes on paper anything unusual about character, setting, vocabulary, dialogue patterns, etc. not brought out in class discussion. Each group secretary then reports his or her group's findings to the class. This will produce further questions and responses.

Using the following notes (listed on the board, from the secretaries' reports), the class finds itself looking at the story from two points of view - as a person in the town living in the year 1928 and as a person living in 1985 (there is yet a third point of view, that of Bradbury the author, but this will be handled in the final writing task):

| Student Findings | Additional Student Comments |
|---|---|
| -"rococo"..... | strange word |
| -courthouse..... | we don't have separate ones |
| -Lavinia, Francine, Helen..... | old-fashioned names |
| -Francine is dressed in snow white.. | who dresses like that to go to a movie? |

| | |
|---|---|
| -Douglas Spalding.. ..... | not Doug? |
| -Miss Fern, Miss Roberta..... | unusual names..old fashioned; we don't put "Miss" in front of first names. |
| -Charlie Chaplin | |
| -"bosh"..... | never heard this word; Dad said his grandpa used it. |
| -Hattie..... | don't any of these people have right names? |
| -hopscotch | |
| -bronze knobs/knockers on doors | |
| -kerchief | |
| -drugstore..... | definitely not CVS; wooden fans; "arnica" is a tincture from a plant that is used for sprains and bruises |
| -tonic? | |
| -"...nickel's worth of green peppermint chews..... | a nickel? |
| -shovels the candy..... | no bags? |
| -chocolate soda..... | in a drugstore? |
| -what is a "maiden lady"? | |
| -movie costs only $.41..... | where? |
| -brass polish in theater | |
| -song "Shine on, Shine on, Harvest Moon"..... | not in the Top 10 |
| -what is a parlor? | |
| -"you're so fine and nice..."..... | would a friend talk like this? |
| -song "oh, give me the June night, the moonlight, and you..." | |

This discussion and sharing forces the class to see that it is looking at the story the same way that a person who studies history does, much the same way it did when asked to organize the wars in years and cultural elements.

The final activity consists of a writing task in which the class, divided into thirds, looks at the story from one of three perspectives: 1) viewing Lavinia Nebbs through the eyes of a friend living in the same period of time, 2) through Bradbury's eyes, or 3) through their own eyes, as 1985 readers. Students are given the following directions:

> In our discussion of Bradbury's work, we have taken a close look at the character of Lavinia Nebbs and at the time frame in which she lives. In your note taking, you brought forth similarities and differences between Lavinia's 1928 and your 1985. You have delved into a piece of fiction as an historian digs into the past. Use one of the following statements to compose a well-supported composition:
>
> Group 1 - Choose one of Lavinia's close friends. Using evidence from the story, consider what Lavinia means to this friend.
>
> Group 2 - Bradbury chose Lavinia as his main character for a reason. After reading the introduction to Dandelion Wine, look at her from his eyes, but remember that he is an author looking back at 1928.
>
> Group 3 - Look at Lavinia Nebbs from a twentieth century viewpoint, as someone looking back in time.

After these compositions are corrected and returned, exemplary writings from each perspective should be read aloud. Key points can then be discussed. Hopefully, good writings will elicit certain points that have importance in an historical-cultural interpretation, such as clear cut differences and similarities between 1928 and 1985 - in attitudes, customs, the role of male and female, character stereotypes, and values.

"The Artificial Nigger"

Historical/Cultural Approaches

Carol Reynolds

Readers recognize the need for historical/cultural perspectives in interpreting literature when they encounter a work which operates in a milieu different enough from their own to render them unable to understand the work completely without some investigation of its times. From students' lips the teacher may hear: "This is a dumb story." Students learn that they can find the knowledge they need to fully understand such works by investigating the historical/cultural elements in the time of the text itself, in the times of the author, and in the times of the reader. The lesson which follows involves all three of these historical times. Students explore the historical/cultural influences evident in the text itself, and then move beyond the text to investigate the cultural conditions of the world in which the story is set and to look at the beliefs of the author to see how they are reflected in the story.

The ideas which follow are designed for upper level high school students (eleventh or twelfth grade) of average or higher ability. It is understood from the start that there are many readings of this complex, rich story. The historical/cultural approach provides one reading which helps many students gain insight into the story. The pre-reading activities will take two class periods, and the reading, analysis, research, and presentations will take four to five class periods.

Pre-Reading Activity for "The Artificial Nigger"

This activity is intended to make students aware of the influence of the historical/cultural elements in a piece of literature. The activity directs students as they write their own short pieces whose historical/cultural setting is vital. The lesson encourages students to practice using historical/cultural elements in their

own writing so that they recognize the importance of these elements in the O'Connor story.

Students are told that they are going to do some writing where an important element is the setting, not just the time and place, but the cultural and ideological setting. Culture in this context is being defined as the sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings which is transmitted from one generation to another. Since the setting we all know best is our own, that is the setting to be used. Students are asked to list the cultural elements of their community in this year. The time and place are predetermined so students must concentrate on the other aspects of the culture.

As students contribute various elements, they are asked to group them as either positive or negative. In my classes some examples listed might include: the mills are all dead and there is little industry in the town; most people have found work in cities nearby; once this was an important vacation spot with hotels, but that's gone now; the same party always wins the elections; families tend to remain in the town, finding it a good place to live; people either hate welfare or are on it; the schools are sometimes attacked by people who think the taxes are too high; new people have been elected to the school board on the promise to work for positive change; the town is influenced by being near a cultural center; most people go to St. Mary's Church; many of the older residents are Italians. Eventually, these can be grouped under the general categories - political, economic, religious, regional, social, educational.

After the elements have been suggested and grouped under the larger categories, students will be asked to think about characters and actions which could be part of a story set in the present in their community. Discussion may include actual people, or kinds of people, in the community, and actions which somehow are tied to, determined by, limited by, influenced by the setting we have

characterized in the earlier discussion. In the final writing the setting is to be real, but the characters and actions are to be fictional.

Finally, students will be asked to write a short story based upon the discussions we have shared. They may, but need not, include their own feelings about the cultural setting in the form of a narrator or in more subtle ways in the story. Students will be asked to bring in a rough draft for the next class period.

During the second class period, students will read their rough drafts aloud to a partner and help one another with writing problems. As they read each other's writing, the key consideration is the cultural setting and its importance to the story. Following this work time, students are instructed to prepare a final draft, due two or three days hence. When the final copies are collected, students are asked to note on the front if they object to having their story read aloud. Since the stories all come out of a common culture, it is interesting to share them aloud.

Class Assignment

Students are assigned the story "The Artificial Nigger" by Flannery O'Connor. As this is a long and fairly complex story, students are asked to keep response journals as they read. Students can be told to stop nine or ten times in the reading or they may be told specifically where to stop. For example, one stop might come as Nelson and Mr. Head wait for the train to Atlanta; another stop certainly might be made just after Mr. Head denies Nelson on the street. In addition to the responses to the reading passages, students are to list any questions whose answers they feel are necessary to understanding the story.

On the first day of discussion of the story, students are asked to share their crucial questions about and their responses to the story. Beginning with these, discussion will move to the nature of the cultural setting of the story. Students are directed to look at the categories of cultural influences which we generated in the pre-reading activity and to decide which are important in this story. They should

recognize the economic influence including the economic position of Mr. Head and Nelson and the elements of poverty in the city, the issues of racism and segregation as specific social problems, the influence of religion, and the influence of the particular geographical region (this is obviously not our town) in which the story is set.

Once the four elements of the cultural setting are specified, groups of students are formed. One group member should serve as official recorder/speaker, although all students should take notes as they work together. Each group is to investigate one of the cultural elements as it is seen in the story. If the class is large, more than one group may investigate each area. Groups larger than 4 or 5 allow for non-participants. Students have three tasks: 1) to closely analyze the story for evidence of "their" element; 2) to note how and where they found this evidence (words, phrases, images, events, motifs, structure, tone, etc.); and 3) to decide if they need to go beyond the text to understand this element of the culture in the story. Further they are to decide where they might find information about the place and times necessary to come to a fuller understanding of the story.

Because the world of this story is very different from the student's world, it is assumed that they will recognize the need for outside material to help them understand the cultural elements in the story. Once the students realize this, they will be directed to go to the library or to history teachers to find more specific information. It is wise to prepare the librarian and other teachers for this. Suggested sources include a biography of Flannery O'Connor; material on the religious tradition of the cycle of sin, repentance, and salvation; and historical sources which detail facts about racial segregation in the South particularly Atlanta, Georgia in the late 1940's and early 1950's, which offer information about the economic system in rural Georgia at that time, and which outline social class distinctions or the life of the rural poor at this time.

Once students have had time to research material, they should meet again in groups and coordinate the historical/cultural clues from the story with the outside material they have found. The directions are to form general conclusions about how each influence is evident in the story. Students are also to share what they have learned beyond the story to help them to understand it in its historical/cultural context. In presenting their information to the entire class, students should also detail their research process.

After all groups have presented their findings, the teacher can help students summarize, emphasizing that these influences must be understood to appreciate the richness of this story. One crucial question which students need to deal with to understand the story involves the significance of the artificial nigger. Once the various historical/cultural influences have been investigated and shared with the class, students are able to give statements of meaning they have discovered in that particular scene, based upon Ms. O'Connor's religious beliefs, the social setting of the times, and the place of Mr. Head, Nelson, and Blacks in that setting.

When completed, this lesson will have shown students the many ways in which historical/cultural influences are manifested in one literary work and one piece of their own writing. Students should recognize that they may have to go beyond a text to gather information to understand these influences. By going through that process they should gain some knowledge of when and how one goes beyond a text to understand it more fully. It is interesting to read some of the students' original writings aloud to speculate about readers who might need to go beyond the text to fully understand these pieces. Can someone from out of the area fully understand the story? How about someone twenty years from now?

Possibilities for follow-up writing assignments include tracing the historical/cultural influences in another of Flannery O'Connor's stories, perhaps "A Good Man is Hard to Find," "Revelation," "The Displaced Person," or in other works used in

the classroom. Alice Walker's "Everyday Use" or Willa Cather's "The Sculptor's Funeral" come to mind.

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# Introduction to Psychological Criticism

Barbara A. Boyce

Weird is the preferred response, second only to the adjective boring, for those literary works which defy easy interpretation for the adolescent critics in this teacher's classroom. Further investigation into the bases for these reactions has usually led to questions about the strange behavior of a character or unexpected twists of plot. Often these are the same ambiguities that intrigue the critics, as in the "whispered meanings" of Simon O. Lesser. (1977)

One such instance occurred in a recent class discussion of The Adventures of Huckleberrry Finn in which tenth grade students asked for an explanation for Colonel Sherburn's decision to shoot Boggs, Emmeline Grangerford's preference for writing about illness and death, and the annihilation of the Grangerford family. Partial answers to their questions could be found in the recurring Twain theme of the violence underlying the conventions of American society or a historical/cultural analysis of the dangers of living on the edge of the American frontier. These interpretations were dutifully recorded in their notes, but the puzzled frowns remained; they still had no explanation for the events that had disturbed them. We, as adults, assume that their sensitivity has been dulled by exposure to the media violence of Rambo, Stephen King, or Halloween III. Although Twain's violence had been placed in the context of the historical period, these students needed more sophisticated explanations, for the violence was not shocking in itself. The basis for it, however, was the area which needed to be explored.

The interpretive approach of psychological criticism was found to be a way to get closer to the mind of the author and his characters in this and other instances of ambiguity in literary analysis. Psychological criticism can be defined very simply as the application of psychological theory to an understanding of literature.

This approach gives the reader a means to sort out some of the workings of the mind that have caused strong reactions to elements of a literary work. By using the tools of the psychological critic to probe the ambiguities that puzzle the reader, deeper insight into the work can be achieved.

As teachers, we have often avoided using the psychological approach for a variety of reasons. Many of us received our instruction in literature from the purist New Critics, who considered the psychological approach to be too subjective. For those of us who had courses in psychology as undergraduates, the emphasis was often on Skinnerian learning theory, developmental and adolescent psychology, transactional analysis, or other schools of psychology studied for the purpose of being effective in motivating learning and controlling classroom conduct.

In order to use the theories of psychology to interpret literature, it is necessary for the teacher to approach the familiar ground of human behavior via a different route and to cover new territory by exploring schools of psychology that offer richer imagery for interpreting literature. Certain works lend themselves to specific schools of psychology; for example, this teacher found a Freudian analysis to be particularly useful in answering questions about Twain's thirteen corpses in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, and an application of Erikson's life stages helped other students to understand why Boo Radley did not come out of the house in Harper Lee's To Kill A Mockingbird.

This does not mean that teachers have to become psychologists or train their students to become junior psychologists. We do, however, have a responsibility to give our students a background in this approach. A case for acquiring this knowledge is well expressed by reader response critic, Louise Rosenblatt:

> Despite the desire to leave these issues to the specialists in psychology, teachers of literature must resign themselves to the fact that they cannot avoid encroaching upon these extremely important and interesting questions concerning human behavior. The problem is that the average teacher or college instructor in literature is not necessarily equipped to handle these topics in a scientific spirit. Hence the

> discussion of characters and motivation tends to follow the superficial lines of ordinary everyday conversation about people. The students may thus very easily conclude that merely on the basis of one's own meager experience and casually acquired assumptions, one may make valid judgments on human motives and conduct. To provide a critical framework, the instructor needs some knowledge of the dominant conceptions in psychology. (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 16)

The schools of psychology that best contribute to an understanding of literature are those that can be used to approach the work as an artistic entity. As Rene Wellek affirms, "...psychological truth is an artistic value only if it enhances coherence and complexity--if, in short, it is art." (Wellek, 1956, p. 93) Viewed from that perspective, it is possible to avoid the abuses which cause so many critics to denigrate psychological interpretations; that is, the danger of overemphasizing the theory over the literary work through an overreliance on psychological jargon. When misused, this method of studying literature can sound like a case study by bending the interpretation to fit a psychological symptom, e.g. describing Hamlet as a "severe case of hysteria on a cyclothemic basis." (Guerin et al, 1979, p. 122)

The greatest fear of most secondary teachers of English is that discussions of psychological concepts, particularly Freudian ones, may reduce literary interpretations to the level of the graffiti on the walls of the high school bathrooms. That can be avoided by carefully selecting psychological theories, taking into consideration the maturity of the class, the teacher's limitations, and the availability of an applicable theory to answer the student questions. To make this task easier for the teacher, there are many excellent high school psychology textbooks and prepared materials available for introducing these theories.

For many critics the psychoanalytic school of Freud is the only theory that is rich enough in metaphor and concept to serve as a vehicle for literary interpretation. Although Freud's ideas have been rejected and disputed repeatedly, the imagery of his theories has become part of our everyday language for describing

human behavior; consequently, students usually have some of the key Freudian terms in their vocabulary, e.g. conscious, subconscious, complex, and ego. The problem remains how to teach the abstract theories that are the basis for these terms so that they can be used for literary interpretation without changing the class into a psychology elective.

Most high school teachers do not have the time in or out of the classroom to cover Freud's writing in depth. As a result, preparation for answering the questions that students raise that would be best answered by a Freudian approach can be expedited by using the diagrams and outlines available in high school texts as well as the ideas of major psychological critics, especially those that have interpreted the work under discussion. The illustrations in many of the psychology texts are well prepared and geared to the comprehension level and interests of high school students. Using these materials makes Freud's psychological "universe" accessible, including his complex theories of the basic life drives (Thanatos and Eros), of the psychosexual stages, of the theories of the mind, of defense mechanisms, and of dreams.

Discomfort for teachers in discussing Freud's theories is centered in his major premise that all human behavior is motivated ultimately by sexuality. In this day of explicit health education, this issue may be less a problem for the student than for the teacher whose task, then, is to judge the relevance of this aspect of Freud's theories to the work the class is studying and to the maturity of the students, as well as the teacher's ability to cope with these subjects. For example, several critics, including Leslie Fiedler (1952), have discussed Huck Finn's relationship with Jim in terms of unconscious homoerotic drives, but it is questionable whether this interpretation adds to the average adolescent's appreciation of the novel.

The neo-Freudian theories of Erik Erikson have been found to be easily applied to classroom use, in particular his eight stages of psychosocial develop-

ment. The basis for the appeal of Erikson's stages for the adolescent is the ease with which the adolescents can relate these stages to their experiences and to the experiences of those around them. As members of families, they can observe the behavior of infants and children, recall their own childhood concerns, and note the crises of the adults in their world. Most of all, the adolescent seems to make an instant connection with Erikson's (195) concepts of "Identity vs. Role Confusion" and "Intimacy vs. Isolation," stages of the teen and young adult years. For example, in discussion Tennessee Williams' short story, " A File of Blue Children," most of the writer's students were able without teacher intervention to apply Erikson's theories to their own questions about Myra's behavior. They were able to analyze Myra's passion for the young poet and her return to the security of her boring but respectable fiance as a manifestation of Myra's confusion over her identity as she approaches graduation from college. In general, Erikson's treatment of adolescent concerns and his emphasis on positive development allows for more comfortable class discussions than Freud's trauma-illness centered theories.

The psychological approach to literature serves as a point of departure for classroom investigations into the meaning of literature. If our students are to get beyond a literal level of thinking about themselves and their world, there is a place for psychology in the language arts classroom. As Bernard J. Paris (1974) has stated:

> Taken together, psychology and fiction give us a far more complete possession of experience than either can give by itself. Psychology helps us to talk about what the novelist knows; fiction helps us to know what the psychologist is talking about. (p. 27)

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# A Psychoanalytic Approach to Joseph Conrad's "The Secret Sharer"

Gail B. Kamm

Encouraging non-regents students to see more than the literal level of literature can be rewarding for both teacher and student. "The Secret Sharer" is difficult reading for many students, but with the proper preparation they can enjoy the story and have a feeling of accomplishment at the conclusion of their study. The easily identified Doppelganger theme of this story serves as a good introduction to the psychological approach to literature.

Since the story's vocabulary and sentence structure can discourage some students, I assign vocabulary before we begin reading. The story is then assigned as several days' homework prior to class discussion.

To motivate my students, I show the thirty-minute film of the same name, which helps them with the literal level but still leaves them unsure about the meaning of the story. As soon as the film ends, the students record any questions in their notebooks and place an asterisk next to the question which they think is most important. This activity engages the students with the story and identifies any literal questions as well as the crux: why does the narrator see Leggatt as his second self?

Next, everyone attempts to answer his own most important question. I circulate and comment positively, assuring students that this work will not be graded; they are just thinking in written form. Several students read their questions and answers aloud.

At the next class session I introduce the Doppelganger theme: conflicting emotions which belong to one character are reflected in another. Leggatt is the narrator's alter ego. He represents repressed aspects of the narrator's personality.

The doubling is obvious, but students need a basic understanding of the workings of the unconscious to understand the story.

Using a simplified diagram which is distributed to each student and also shown with the overhead projector, I explain the functions of the id, the superego, and the ego and discuss the defense mechanisms used by the ego to protect it from the demands of the unconscious. (For diagrams see, Psychology A Way to Grow, p. 166 and p. 169.)

Before the next class, each student carefully rereads an assigned section of the story as homework. In class, Group 1 students meet to discuss the opening of the story to the point at which Leggatt states that he had been mate of the Sephora. They examine the narrator's behavior and identify passages which indicate which area of his mind is in control. (The superego) They also list examples of the way the crew reacts to him.

Group 2 examines the story from the point at which Group 1 stops to the end of Part I. The task is to notice references to Leggatt as the narrator's double, study the incident on the Sephora, and determine which area of the mind Leggatt represents. (The id)

Group 3 rereads Part II to the fourth day out. Its task is to analyze the skipper of the Sephora. Which area of his mind controls him? (superego) Is it likely that the narrator could ever become a man such as he? The group discusses the similarities and differences of the two. This group also takes note of how the narrator feels when he is on deck and Leggatt is in his cabin.

Group 4 begins where Group 3 stops and rereads to the end. These students examine the narrator's behavior as the story comes to a close. Other than helping Leggatt, what was accomplished by bringing the ship so close to land? In what ways has the narrator changed? What caused him to change? What area of his mind is in control? (The ego has achieved a balance of the superego and the id.)

Groups of four students seem to work best. More than one group may work on any of the tasks, however. Each appoints a secretary who records its findings on a transparency. While the groups are meeting, I circulate, helping wherever necessary. After approximately twenty minutes, transparencies are collected, shown with an overhead projector, and discussed. Students then check the questions generated at the beginning of our study to be sure all have been answered. The psychological model is retained in student notebooks for future use.

My objective is to have the students come to a realization that the narrator is prevented from assuming true control of his ship and men by an overactive superego. The ego must achieve a balance of the superego and id. When the narrator identifies with Leggatt he comes to accept his own instinctive, impulsive side. Consequently, he is released from the grip of the superego which has paralyzed him by demanding perfection.

Group responses will vary, depending upon the ability and interest of the students. Sample responses might be:

Group 1 - Captain/Crew relationship
He feels all alone--only stranger
Second mate sneers at him. Captain just looks down.
Feels like a stranger doing something unusual--takes watch
Chief mate and second mate very surprised
Worried about being in charge of ship and men
Worried about what men think of him

Area of mind: (superego)
Stranger to himself
Others only have to do their job--he'd like to be ideal self
Wants everything exact
Worried about being in charge of ship and men
Worried about what men think of him

Group 2 - double--Leggatt represents the id
Both have dark hair
Both wear sleeping suit
Like looking in a mirror
My double
Own gray ghost
He was not a bit like me, really
Double captain
Other self

Identical
Secret self
Secret sharer of my life
Second self
Whispering to myself

Incident on the Sephora:
Killed in a fit of temper
Storm--ship about to sink
Man wouldn't do his duty and wouldn't let anybody else do theirs
Had him by the throat when wave hit
Ten minutes later found still holding him by neck
Man black in face
Men yell murder
Sail saved ship
Captain afraid of the men

Group 3 - Skipper of the Sephora (superego)
Mumbles as if ashamed
Manner of criminal confessing
Wife aboard
Never drinks
Worried what people will think--well-known shipmaster
Worried what wife will think
Scandalized
Religious
Anxious to give killer to law
Never gave order to raise sail

Narrator on deck/Leggatt in cabin:
Torn in two
Part of him absent
Mental feeling of being in two places at once
Trouble giving orders
Has to call self back from cabin

Group 4 - Narrator at end (ego)
Thunders at steward; now commands men
Gives orders
Won't let men question orders
Scared when boat close to land but keeps on
Tells mate to be quiet
Shakes mate; makes men obey
Hat helps him save ship; he controls ship by instinct
Knows what he is doing
Perfect communion of a seaman with his first command

Discussion of the group findings helps the students to interpret the story psychologically.

Writing Assignments: (Choose one)

A. Learning to control a ship can be compared to learning to control one's life. What has the narrator learned from this experience?

B. Write a different story. Your story will have the identical opening section as Conrad's, but in your story no swimmer ever appears and the narrator does not change his behavior. What might have happened on that ship if the young captain had remained as he was in the opening section?

C. Write a completely different story in which Doppelganger appears. This alter ego should act as your main character unconsciously wants to act.

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# A Psychological Critic Looks at "A Narrow Fellow in the Grass"

David J. Marhafer

Freudian analysis may seem beyond the pale of the English class, but my students finally used it and as a result were enlightened with regard to the narrator in Emily Dickinson's "A Narrow Fellow in the Grass." We did not address any of Freud's thinking from "Creative Writers and Daydreaming" because I wanted to avoid discussing the relationship between the author and his work. I thought of that as too speculative to keep my presentation a psychoanalytic one. Neither did we address the aspect of his theory which focuses on the effects the writing is likely to have on the reader. We also excluded conversation about Freud's delineations of the person into id, ego and superego. Instead, his ideas about another tripartite division of the human psyche into three levels, the conscious, preconscious and unconscious regions seemed to present a workable model. My Advanced Junior English students and I were about to read the Dickinson poem.

A narrow Fellow in the Grass
Occasionally rides--
You may have met Him--did you not
His notice sudden is--

The Grass divides as with a Comb--
A spotted shaft is seen--
And then it closes at your feet
And opens further on--

He likes a Boggy Acre
A Floor too cool for Corn--
Yet when a Boy, and Barefoot--
I more than once at Noon
Have passed, I thought, a Whip lash
Unbraiding in the Sun
When stooping to secure it
It wrinkled, and was gone--

Several of Nature's People
I know, and they know me--
I feel for them a transport
Of cordiality--

But never met this Fellow
Attended or Alone
Without a tighter breathing
And Zero at the Bone--

Emily Dickinson
1866

As a prereading exercise to introduce the poem I had the students identify and discuss what they believed to be the greatest fears of characters from our previous reading of stories and viewing of plays. I wrote these characters' names on the board as we remembered them and the students presented their ideas about what the character feared and why. This had not been a part of our previous conversations in class about those selections or characters. (Another possibility for spurring discussion and initiating reading is to have each student write his or her strongest fear on a 3x5 card, the fear that the student thinks about the most; collect them and generate discussion based on their own fears.) From their discussion lasting about twenty-five minutes we moved on to their freewriting for about ten minutes in their journals about the fear that they saw as most threatening of all. The class ended. Next day I asked if there were any people who would be willing to hand in their freewritings for sharing. There were some who were willing. I then asked the whole class to read their writings from the previous day to themselves and to bracket the sentence which to them was the kernel of their writing, the sentence which most clearly identified this greatest fear. Some of these follow:

> The unhappiest person in the world is the one who has no love--no friends--nothing. That has got to be the worst feeling--to have no one to talk to, to turn to, to care.
>
> Claudia

> My deepest fears...deal with growing up through college and coming out with nothing or nowhere to go.
>
> Greg

> The thing that scares me the most is dependence, insecurity, the unknown.
>
> Jocelyn

...to be behind glass--helpless and useless-watching, hearing and feeling someone you care for very much go through pain and agony.

John

It has got to be scary not knowing. It's the unknown.

Maryann

The most horrible thing that could ever happen to me would be losing my mother.

Michele

Old age is nothingness, no fun at all, aching bones, wrinkles, false teeth, gray hair.

Sherri

Imagine your whole life amounting to nothing noticeable, nothing that would ever even be written down. That's what scares me.

Tim

After a few minutes I then asked these students to think of a word, phrase, or sentence which would best describe the scariest thing. Some of their responses:

Utter shame and loneliness.

Claudia

A huge hole that goes down forever and ever and is so dark you can't see your hand in front of your face.

Greg

It feels like I'm losing myself and losing control.

Jill

A heart-wrenching, stomach-turning, lump-in-the-throat, pathetically helpless, no win, Catch 22 situation.

John

There was no life in my body; I felt empty.

Leah

A slow ache inside of me, a bruised spot on my heart

Maryann

A cold, empty, shaking place inside me, making me nervous at every turn

Wendy

Next we read the poem aloud and I assigned a careful silent reading. After the reading we generated a question on a half sheet of paper which to each reader posed the critical issue of interpretation. I collected these at the end of the period and thus ended day two. I typed and distributed the questions the students asked on

the third day. Before beginning to answer these questions, I suggested some new information I had which might help elucidate their questions regarding the text of the poem. I explained Freud's theory regarding the three levels of consciousness going on inside our heads. I illustrated the point diagram from Psychology: A Way to Grow (p. 166). The notion of a three-part division frustrated some of my juniors, but for purposes of literary conversation they were willing to concede that this theory might help explain the narrator's situation in the poem. We finally arrived at a working definition of the three levels as follows:

> The Conscious Mind: receiving information from the environment leading to awareness of what is going on in our surroundings as well as within our own bodies; experiences are blended with memories, fantasies, dreams and hopes; we are aware of pleasures and pains, likes and dislikes. (passive mode)
>
> Planning, long and short term; envisioning, making choices and initiating activities. (active mode)
>
> The Preconscious Mind: remembering available memories not conscious at any given moment; transforming into consciousness material easily and under conditions which frequently arise; easily becomes conscious.
>
> The Unconscious Mind: less available to awareness than preconscious experiences; processes are inferred to explain certain behavior; made up of active mental processes much like conscious activities but they go on without our awareness; consciously experienced events are driven out of consciousness and lost to memory; can only come about with a considerable expenditure of energy, or may never occur at all.

On the fourth day I had the class count off by three's and divided them into the three groups according to Freud's division of the mind. Their assignment was to read the poem from that particular stance, selecting a secretary to note things encountered in this third reading and to record the answers to the questions which the group had generated. Their final responsibility was to arrive at an interpretation of the poem. This created much speculation including a very formal reading of the poem from the "conscious mind group," probably the people with the easiest task. While the "preconscious mind" group had the least definable reading and the greatest amount of speculative range, the "unconscious" group had the hardest

time. The students in this third group immediately were frustrated by the possibility of a sexual reading; and as I moved throughout the room interacting with each group, they were the ones who needed the greatest encouragement to give names to their suspicions, to identify the images that they were seeing as sexual and to accurately label them. Thus we moved from the level of a simple narrative "this boy on a walk came upon a snake" from group one through "maybe this narrator was scared one time by a snake" from group one through "maybe this narrator was scared one time by a snake, or maybe the narrator had been robbed or even raped once and was now remembering that very painful experience by the normal occurrence of seeing something unpleasant" from group two. Group three's reading startled the class. They speculated that "maybe this narrator was looking back to a fonder time when sexuality had no place in an androgynous existence, that is to that time when my friend could be either a boy or a girl and gender made no difference, that time when I was truly asexual." The "unconscious mind" group also saw that perhaps this narrator was frightened by some of the images which appeared: "vaginal" grass dividing, a Whip lash "phallus" engorging and waning, and a dreadful fear of awakening sexuality.

When my students came to class on the fifth day, I asked them to write from the following stimulus:

> It is said of many youthful activities and perceptions that "ignorance is bliss." Think of a time--or times-- when you were young and you ate something or ventured an undertaking that now in your "wisdom" gives you pause. Perhaps there were experiences you never have been willing to undertake to this day! Write about this situation you have experienced. Try to articulate precisely enough that the fear or distaste is palpable to the reader.

Our reading of Miss Dickinson's poem was clearly clarified by this psychological model. Our understanding grew as the discussion progressed; we drew conclusions within this framework new to my classroom discussions of "A Narrow Fellow in the Grass." My input was greatly reduced; students learned more and

better with this psychological model than if I had constructed the most carefully articulated series of guide questions.

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# Overview of Mythological Criticism

Doris M. Quick

Almost every English program I know of gives some attention to the study of myth. In my own background, I remember studying Greek and Roman heroes in seventh grade and quite loving it. In the school where I teach, a three or four-week unit is devoted to study of mythology in grade 9 and, in addition, there are two one-semester electives in mythology, one for Regents track students and the other for less academic students. All courses seem popular with young readers. However, a question arises. Does myth study find its way into the curriculum simply because it is popular with students or is there a more compelling reason for our interest in the study of myth?

Interestingly, a varied and impressive body of scholarship exists which tries to explain the significance of this literature called mythology - this literature that most of us are familiar with as primitive stories of heroes and gods and winged horses. The scholarship derives from such far-flung fields as psychology, anthropology, cultural history, religion, and sociology, so that it may be somewhat presumptuous to consider this a school of literary criticism. What unites these diverse fields of inquiry is an interest in examining the body of literature called mythology as an artifact of a civilization or a culture with an eye to determining various values. What separates these diverse fields is the bias from which the study emanates and the interpretation placed on the value of the corpus of mythology. In this brief introduction to mythological criticism, we will examine five of the major mythological studies and identify their distinguishing characteristics as well as show areas of agreement. Finally, we will consider what these studies may offer the classroom teacher interested in presenting a mythological model to students as yet another way to unlock a piece of literature under study.

Offering psychological insights into the significance of myth are the well-known writers Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and Otto Rank, none of whom is thought of as a literary critic yet all of whom offer fascinating studies of literature for our consideration. Freud, for example, is well-known for having identified the Oedipus complex named for the hero of Sophocles' and other interpreters' story of a king who unwittingly fulfilled a prophecy to kill his father and marry his mother. What is not well known is that for Freud, the enactment of an Oedipal wish to eliminate one's father and love one's mother is inherently part of the human coming-to-adulthood passage. The myth for Freud is not merely a metaphor for a behavior he observed, but an essential ingredient in the maturation of humans. For Freud, then, Oedipus is not simply an interesting story; it is the ESSENTIAL story, one we as members of the human race will be destined to retell because it is so essential a part of our pysche. Modern Freudians find Oedipal elements in much fiction and their mission is to reinterpret the Oedipal stories remembering their basis in human growth.

Carl Jung, Freud's disciple, on the other hand, gives us the concept of archetype. Like Freud, he sees the importance of this idea springing from the psyche. Unlike Freud, however, he believes the notion of archetypes or universal images, characters, symbols, or story patterns are embedded in the collective unconscious of all humankind regardless of the time they lived or the culture that shaped them. Some examples of universal archetypes are the images of water including the sea and the rivers which are often associated with birth or ressurection, purification, redemption, fertility, and growth. The sun may call up associations with the passage of time and live with the rising sun especially evocative of birth, the setting sun with death. Garden images may suggest paradise and innocence while trees can suggest life, the regenerative process or knowledge. This brief listing runs the risk of making the theory simplistic,

something like the little paper back book of dream interpretations I had as a child. It is not a simplistic theory, and interested readers are directed to further reading at the end of this chapter.

Otto Rank, also influenced by Freud, writes in The Myth of the Birth of the Hero: A Psychological Interpretation of Mythology, of his findings from a comparative study of hundreds of myths from cultures as diverse in time and space as the Babylonians, Egyptians, Hebrews, Hindus, Persians, Greeks and Romans. He notes among the various myths remarkable similarities especially in the birth and coming of the groups' culture hero. Rank identified eight stages that seem to recur in birth-of-the-hero myths world-wide:

1. the hero is the child of a king
2. the birth is preceded by difficulty
3. there is a prophecy during the pregnancy
4. the child is surrendered to water in a box
5. the child is saved and suckled by animals or lowly people
6. the child grows up and finds distinguished parents
7. the grown up takes revenge on his father
8. the hero achieves rank and honor

These eight stages parallel the growth of ego in the child. In the first three stages, the child believes in the infallibility of his father (real king). In the middle stages, the child learns his parents are fallible, but wishes they were perfect. In the late adolescent stage, the child kills off the perfect father (figuratively, we hope), accepts reality, and achieves ego strength.

For the psychologists, then, myths spring from deep in our psyche and may serve the purpose of allowing us as humans to examine some of our innermost struggles to achieve personhood.

Coming from a somewhat different bias is Northrop Frye, perhaps the one mythological critic discussed here who really is a literary critic first and foremost. In addition, Frye has lent his thinking to the shaping of a literature series based on the notion that the structure of myth is the unifying element that makes the study of literature sensible. In his introduction to Literature: The Uses of the Imagination (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich). Frye points out that myths are associated in some way with the natural world and are shaped in part by natural cyclical rhythms such as the passing of the seasons, or the rising and setting of the sun. As story tellers (read mythmakers) we are influenced by natural cycles as we relate stories of passing from innocence to experience, from birth to death. In addition to a cyclical rhythm, there is what Frye calls a dialectical rhythm that springs from man's awareness that there is a discrepency between the ideal world and the world we actually live in. A writer's awareness of this discrepency creates myths that imagine a better world (a paradise) or an even worse one (a hell or place of suffering). Out of these two rhythms, cyclical and dialectic, grow four fundamental types of literature: romance, tragedy, satire-irony, and comedy. This framework, growing out of a sense of the cyclical nature of the world and a sense that all is not necessarily "right" in the world, gives an organizational device that helps classify and show the relationships between all literature in all time and from all cultures.

We see, then, that mythological critics offer quite a different view of the nature of myth and the study of literature than is common. First of all myth is seen not as a random collection of primitive stories, but as a body of writing that springs from some deep inherent part of our humanness and our wish to understand our world and our relationship to it. In fact, Harry Slochower in Mythopoesis: Mythic Patterns In Literary Classics suggests that all myth (and by extension, all literature) addresses three questions: where do I come from? (creation myths); where do I go? (destiny myths); and how do I get there? (quest myths).

What are the implications for the teacher of literature? It seems that the mythological critics offer organizing principles for the entire body of literature we study that may make more sense to students than our usual organizational patterns such as chronology or genre. If the myth critics are correct, and there are indeed certain universal images and patterns deep in our unconscious, this insight can have significance for teachers who wish to approach or enter a piece of literature with students with some reader-response activities, the premise of this collection of essays. Such a teacher might ask herself what basic mythic elements exist in a piece of literature and then ask students to react to these elements before reading a given work. A more specific example of such an activity is suggested in the chapter on A Separate Peace.

The teacher embarking on a mythological interpretation of a given work should be aware of certain limitations. Mythic readings can become symbol hunts as we search for water imagery, quests, wicked step-mothers. Also, in looking for the connections that link this piece of literature in front of us to the corpus of all literature that ever existed, we may lose track of the uniqueness of the work in our hands. The final word on mythological criticism is that it is one more tool in the hands of the careful reader, whether teacher or student.

In closing, I'd like to note with appreciation that much of the reading I have done in the fascinating field of myth, myth criticism, and modern reinterpretations of mythic themes was supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Council for Basic Education under their program of summer independent study in the humanities. I am pleased for an opportunity to thank them for this opportunity.

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## The Application of Archetypal Criticism to John Knowles' A SEPARATE PEACE

Doris Quick

John Knowles' novel of a young boy's loss of innocence and his growing awareness of his own potential for evil set against a backdrop of a progressively more evil war is frequently taught in the eighth, ninth, and tenth grades. First of all, the young narrator Gene Forrester and the magical hero, Finny, are immediately attractive to and accessible to young readers. Second, the novel is finely wrought and deals with significant issues in a non-condescending way. Finally, it can't possibly cause any censorship problems.

In this discussion of a teaching strategy based on the application of Northrop Frye's theory of archetypes, we will assume that students have read the novel through once and understand it on the literal level. Archetypal patterns of fall, trees, and rivers will be examined to show how they function to help the reader come to grips with Gene's awareness of his own possibility for evil and guilt in the time of the parallel evil and guilt associated with World War II. The present discussion is triggered by a fine analysis of the novel by James Ellis, "A SEPARATE PEACE: THE FALL FROM INNOCENCE" appearing in the May 1964 English Journal. I strongly recommend that a teacher read carefully this perceptive treatment before embarking on the following adventure.

On the first day of what will be a close re-reading of the novel, the teacher may introduce the concept of archetypes by asking students to free associate with such words as summer, winter, fall, spring, tree, river. I remind students that they have seen psychologists on TV ask patients to free associate with words, and that we will do the same thing. As I dictate each word slowly, I ask students to jot-list any ideas that come to mind when they think of each word. I then ask students to share their lists and I record the responses on the blackboard in columns headed

"summer", "fall", etc. I ask students to notice similarities and to discuss them. If any of the responses seem very personal and idiosyncratic (spring means going to Cape Cod), we note them and consider casting them out since we are searching for universal symbols. Probably, many of the responses will be similar, and I ask students to account for this similarity. They will note that spring is often a time of renewal: spring housecleaning, new outfits, pastel clothes, Easter, and so on.

After some general discussion of why we tend to respond similarly to certain words, I introduce the idea of archetypes. I suggest that a critic, Northrop Frye, has defined archetypes as images, themes, motifs, or literary types that recur in the myths of people regardless of where or when they may have lived. They seem not to be culture bound, but instead to be, in fact, universal symbols and images that have common meanings or that tend to elicit common responses as they did in our class experiment. Some of these images and a fuller discussion of archetypes appear in the chapter that introduces this section of the book. Of particular interest to our consideration of Knowles' novel, however, are the images of rivers as places of baptism and of transitional phases; of gardens as places of innocence associated with paradise, and especially the tree of knowledge in the garden of Eden; fall as a season associated with sunset and preparation for winter and death, and fall as a verb suggestive of the fall from innocence in the garden of Eden; and the archetype of the initiation of the hero wherein the hero passes from innocence to knowledge after undergoing a series of ordeals that often involve separation, transformation, and return. Next, (and this may be a second class period depending on how fruitful the discussion of archetypes was. It is difficult to know exactly how long this lesson should take, but is is probably at least three class meetings and some homework time.) I ask students to work in small groups of three or four on the following task:

It is possible that John Knowles has used archetypal symbols to enrich his novel. I would like you to re-read closely certain sections of the novel and note references to the archetypal symbols of river, tree, summer, fall, winter. Note plot elements in your assigned sections, and list words that describe the particular archetypes. This will take about 45 minutes of classtime and may involve some homework time.

Group 1 (and there may be several group 1's depending on class size) should re-read closely the early (summer) chapters 1-4.

Group 2 re-reads the fall chapters 5 and 6.

Group 3 re-reads the winter chapters 7-13.

Fill in the following chart for your assigned chapters:

| tree | river | summer | fall | winter |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |

After students have had sufficient time to re-read and complete the chart, synthesize on the blackboard their observations. You ought to have a chart that looks something like this:

| Early Chapters | Middle Chapters | End Chapters |
|---|---|---|
| Summer | fall season | winter |
| no rules at school | fall from innocence | awareness for Gene |
| Devon River-clean | Naguamsett River dirty | Finney dies |
| Tree is for fun | fall from tree causes | war is real and |
| war is far away- | Finny's accident | horrible |
| a game | Gene experiences quiet | |
| innocence | school rules tightened | |

Opening chapter of full awareness precedes story and brings the events full cycle

Finally, ask students to study the blackboard clusters carefully and to come to some conclusion about how the archetypal symbols may help us understand the novel as a whole. You are hoping for some statement that says that the archetypal symbols of summer/winter, Devon river/Naguamsett River, and fall as season/fall as fall from innocence, all work together to help the reader understand the contrast between war and peace as a backdrop for the narrator's coming to grips with his own potential for evil. You may not get quite that, but be happy if something similar comes from the students. It seems important that you are not the all-wise reader who supplies this synthesis, but that it comes from the students' own observations.

As a follow-up writing assignment, you might ask students to write a description of a fictionalized character engaged in some kind of crisis. Suggest a student going off to college or summer camp or the senior high school, or a young

person making an improtant decision, or a person applying for a job. Students should very consciously create a backdrop of season and color that enhances the idea behind the character's conflict. Admittedly, the class has not talked about color symbolism, but they ought to pick up on that pretty quickly.

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## A Feminist Archetypal Approach to Jane Eyre

Roseanne Y. DeFabio

Teachers committed to developing in their students a capability for independent literary analysis will, I believe, find their lesson preparation falling into two phases. In the first phase the teacher will select and master the critical material which will be most useful to teacher and students in interpreting literature. In the second phase the teacher will condense and simplify that material until it is in a format and at a level of difficulty suited to the students' academic development. This article will lead the reader through both phases as it develops a feminist archetypal approach to the teaching of Jane Eyre.

Some preliminary comments. First, I have called this a "feminist archetypal" approach because the basic pattern which I ask the students to trace in Jane Eyre is a variation of the archetypal "mythic hero" pattern in which the hero is separated from his family and home and goes on a journey during which he encounters and conquers a variety of enemies before he achieves the final reward of wholeness and self-knowledge. What I hope the students will see is that Jane follows this basic pattern of the mythic hero throughout the novel from her initial separation from her family to her triumphant union with Rochester at the end. However, because Jane is a female, her behavior is considered by her society, and sometimes by herself, as madness rather than heroism. To understand this concept of madness requires social and psychological frameworks as well as the archetypal pattern. Therefore, the lesson includes material from all these areas.

The second point to be made is that this model is for advanced high school students. I have used it successfully with twelfth graders and with college preparatory eleventh graders. I would hesitate to attempt it with students at a lower level.

Finally, this model is not a complete approach to the teaching of Jane Eyre. I use it at the end of the unit on Jane Eyre after the students have been through a variety of other activities including pre-reading writings, a complete reading of the text, a variety of reader response activities, and the application of other traditional approaches to the novel.

In formulating this model for feminist archetypal criticism, I was fortunate to come upon Barbara Hill Rigney's book, Madness and Sexual Politics in the Feminist Novel. The advantage of Ms. Rigney's book for the teacher of literature is that it not only provides an excellent theoretical framework for feminist analysis, but it also applies that framework to a specific analysis of some commonly taught works, among them Jane Eyre.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE TEACHER

From Ms. Rigney's work some important premises of feminist psychoanalytic criticism emerge:

1. The principles of psychology and psychiatry represent values and standards defined exclusively by men. Ms. Rigney reminds us of Germaine Greer's observation: "Freud is the father of psychoanalysis. It had no mother."
2. That which is considered normal and desirable behavior for men is thought to be neurotic, or even psychotic, for women.
3. Most feminists see madness, first, as a political event. Female insanity can, in a majority of cases, be explained by the oppression of women in a male supremacist society.
4. For the feminist, madness in women is an intense experience of biological, sexual, and cultural castration, and a doomed search for potency. This view of madness destroys Freud's deterministic theories and sees the negative experience of women as a cultural phenomenon rather than an anatomical inevitability.

5. Ideally, psychoanalytic theories should not work to force women into roles society has dictated, but rather should define women as individuals capable of both freedom and responsibility.
6. The language and the ideology of orthodox psychology are useless for a feminist analysis. However, R. D. Laing's revolutionary approach to psychoanalysis can provide a terminology and a framework convenient for feminist protest.

Laing's theory sees madness as a "spiritual journey" similar to the archetypal pattern of the quest. The following is a selection of Laing's observation on madness which can be useful in a feminist analysis of literature:

1. Psychosis is a "sane" response to life in a destructive society.
2. Madness is but a stage in the evolution of a conscious, truly sane person. (Note - Jung's mythic heroes pass through a phase of withdrawal and deep introspection before returning as lawgivers.)
3. "Superior sanity" is achieved through the recognition of the general illness of society and the implications of that illness for the individual psyche.
4. Both men and women are existential entities, but role prescriptions cause a division of the self in some cases.
5. The division of the self is expressed through the presence of a Doppelganger. The Doppelganger represents the recognition of the tragedy of one's own fragmentation and of the alienation of oneself.
6. Ontologically insecure people are in constant dread of engulfment (the sense that one may lose oneself in the identity of another). This dread is commonly expressed in images of burning, drowning, and bondage.

An understanding of the preceding premises of feminist psychoanalytic criticism and, in particular, the specific terminology and framework provided by

Laing for a feminist reading of literature will provide the teacher with one workable feminist perspective on literature.

## A CRITICAL MODEL FOR STUDENTS

From the critical material outlined above, the teacher will devise appropriate student materials which will lead to a feminist archetypal interpretation of literature, using Jane Eyre as an example. The first tool for the student is a definition of what we mean by feminist novels. In this context feminist novels might be defined as those novels which present studies of alienated female consciousnesses in opposition to a male society or to individual male authority figures. The common pattern found in these novels can be outlined as follows:

1. Rejection of father figure and dread of engulfment
2. Expression of the divided self in the form of the Doppelganger
3. Annihilation of male authority figures and of the Doppelganger
4. Search for the metaphoric mother and discovery of the mother within the self
5. Return from psychosis.

After the students have studied the definition and common pattern which can be applied to any feminist novel, they are given the outline and worksheet which are reproduced below. With this outline and worksheet the students go back to the text to trace the feminist archetypal patterns in the novel Jane Eyre. As mentioned before, this outline presumes the students have some familiarity with archetypal patterns, especially the mythic hero pattern. However, some other archetypes (e.g., the Moon Mother) must be taught as students progress through the outline.

| MALE | TERMS OF AUTHORITY | ASSOCIATION WITH MURDER | RESPONSE OF JANE | DREAD OF ENGULFMENT (IMAGES) BURNING | DREAD OF ENGULFMENT (IMAGES) BONDAGE | ANNIHILATION |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| John Reed | | | | | | |
| Rev. Brocklehurst | | | | | | |
| St. John Rivers | | | | | | |
| Rochester | | | | | | |

JANE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MALE AUTHORITY FIGURES

| MALE | TERMS OF AUTHORITY | ASSOCIATION WITH MURDER | RESPONSE OF JANE | DREAD OF ENGULFMENT (IMAGES) BURNING | DREAD OF ENGULFMENT (IMAGES) BONDAGE | ANNIHILATION |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| John Reed | cousin<br>only male<br>"young master" p. 6 | "You are like a murderer." p. 5 | Jane strikes him, is locked in red room, has fit | the red room | "You are like a slave driver - like the Roman emperor" p. 5 | Debauchery ending in suicide. |
| Rev. Brocklehurst | "Master" of the school<br>only male | Cuts the girls' hair<br>Kills spirit of the girls<br>Causes death of Helen Burns and others | Jane escapes to woods | Preaches Hell fire | Absolute power<br>Harsh punishments | Socially discredited<br>Disappears |
| St. John Rivers | only male<br>"forebearing but exacting master" p. 380 | "If I were to marry you, you would kill me. You're killing me now." p. 394 | Jane leaves to find Rochester | Hell fire, but more often ice | "When he said 'go' I went... but did not love my servitude." p. 380 | Gone to India<br>Nearing death in his mission |
| Rochester | only male<br>"my master" | Adele says, "You will starve her." p. 253<br>Jane says, "I had no intention of dying with him." p. 259<br>Causes death of Bertha Mason | Withdraws from Thornfield Hall to save self from psychological annihilation<br>Even at departure "my kind master" p. 305 | Invites to come close to the fire<br>"his touch and glance burn like coals"<br>Injured in fire set by Bertha | Says to Jane, "I'll attach you to a chain."<br>Refers to Jane's "governessing slavery" p. 256<br>Jane sees him bind Bertha with rope<br>Says to Jane, "I want just this promise, I'll be yours, Mr. Rochester." P. 300 | Blind and mutilated<br>Dependent on Jane "a royal eagle...forced to entreat a sparrow to become its purveyor" p. 420<br>Turns over watch and chain to Jane. p. 427<br>"He stretched out his hand to be led." p. 429<br>"Reader, I married him." p. 429 |

(SAMPLE RESPONSES)

OUTLINE FOR A FEMINIST ARCHETYPAL INTERPRETATION OF JANE EYRE

I. The Male Authority Figures (see worksheet)

II. The Doppelganger - Bertha Mason as double of Jane

- A. Androgynous (the unfeminine in Jane)
- B. Violent
- C. Passionate, unchaste
- D. Annihilation

III. Search for the mother

- A. The human disappointments
  - 1. Mrs. Reed
  - 2. Helen Burns
  - 3. Miss Temple
  - 4. The Rivers sisters
- B. Methaphorical mothers
  - 1. The Moon
    - a. association with chastity
    - b. association with fertility
  - 2. The Earth - Cosmic Mother
- C. Self as mother

IV. Return from psychosis

- A. The integrated self
- B. Relationship to Rochester
- C. Attitude to the Rivers

In my class after the students receive the materials for the model (including definition, list of common elements, outline, and worksheet), some class time is spent in reviewing familiar archetypal patterns and explaining new ones. I then

assign students to groups to go back to the text and analyze one of the patterns suggested by the outline. One group might investigate the Doppelganger, another the metaphorical mother. Several groups will work on the male authority figures since it is Jane's relations with these male figures that corresponds most closely to the mythic hero's battles with monsters and overcoming of obstacles. The sample completed worksheet shows the textual evidence students in the groups on male authority figures might find to demonstrate Jane's progress from the first signs of "madness" in the incident with John Reed through to her final "return from psychosis" where she is, as Rochester says, "altogether a human being."

When the groups have completed their tasks, they report their findings to the class. At this time the members of the class are expected to question the other groups in order to come to an understanding of each pattern. The goal is that each student will master all the patterns suggested, not just the particular one assigned to him/her.

As a result of participating in a group analysis of one of the archetypal patterns and listening to and questioning the reports of the other groups, each individual should have accomplished two things. First, each will have acquired another perspective to bring to an interpretation of Jane Eyre. Secondly, and I think more importantly, the student will have a new approach which he/she can apply to future independent reading of feminist novels.

The teacher has the satisfaction of knowing that, like the missionary who teaches the natives to fish rather than bringing them food, he/she has provided the students with a means to future self-sufficiency. Each critical model we provide for our students makes them more competent independent critical thinkers.

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# Multiple Critical Approaches to "A Rose for Emily"

Carol Reynolds

This chapter is designed to present to the reader tested classroom methods and materials for approaching a rich piece of literature from a variety of perspectives. The activities are designed to include as many writing and reading techniques as possible and to lead the students to interpret William Faulkner's short story, "A Rose for Emily," in many different ways. The ultimate goal is for students to learn to examine the various approaches on their own, searching that which unlocks the greatest meaning for each individual text. This material is intended to be used near the end of the school year, or sometime after the students have gained confidence in using the various approaches to literature.

A story as multifaceted as "A Rose for Emily" is an excellent choice for classroom use when requiring multiple approaches, for it seems open to many interpretations and almost all of the critical models commonly accepted can be applied to some aspect of the story to help make meaning. The story is complex enough for students to see the necessity of analysis for a complete understanding, yet it unfolds fairly easily when students approach it with their critical knowledge.

At least seven days of classroom time will be needed for the following activities. The specific activities which follow have been designed for use with eleventh grade students. In the course of the work with this story, students will utilize many thinking skills and parts of all the major critical approaches. Students will utilize reader response techniques to gain initial entry into the story. Two major writing experiences - one a creative assignment and the other an analytical writing - are also included.

General Schedule

Day 1 - Pre-writing for narrative

Day 2 - Work on rough draft of narrative

Read aloud beginning of "A Rose for Emily" with stops for written responses

Day 3 - Share reader responses to story

Begin groups to analyze the story from the various perspectives

Day 4, 5, +? - Group work on story

Last class day - Share interpretations

After sharing interpretations, students are to write an analytical paper.

Narrative Writing

The first activity associated with "A Rose for Emily" is designed to prepare students for the point of view used by Faulkner in the story and to insure that this is not a block which keeps students from fully entering into the story. The activity is begun before any reference is made to the story. Students are led through a full period pre-writing activity whose directions follow:

Day One - Pre-Writing

Generally this assignment concerns the relationship of an individual and his/her society. The technical details of the final product will be explained as we go through the pre-writing. You need to write down your ideas throughout the pre-writing exercise and should keep writing at all times.

1. Jot-list sections (any except metropolitan areas) of the United States which you feel have specific feelings associated with them. For example, northern New England may seem austere, miserly, or closed; rural Alabama may seem devastated, poverty stricken, or closed to the outside world; the California coast may seem open, free, or the land of experimental living. From your list, choose one section. Name a town, real or fictional, within the section and list adjectives to describe the atmosphere of the two. (5 to 10 minutes)

2. In detail, describe the center of the town in sentences. (3 to 5 minutes)
3. Choose a person living in this town who stands out from the general populace for some reason. This should be someone who just does not fit in, who contrasts with the townspeople in one or more ways. This person may be a foreigner, newcomer, old timer, or one of differing class, education, ideas, life style, etc. (Think of Dolphus Raymond or Boo Radley in To Kill a Mockingbird.) Name the person and jot down his/her major difference(s) from the townspeople. How old is this person? Give a physical description of him/her. (5 to 10 minutes)
4. Enter the mind of your "outstanding" character. From his/her point of view, write about your differences with the townspeople. Give your view of the town and its people as a group. (5 to 10 minutes)
5. Read your character's words aloud to a partner. Comment on each other's writing. Each listener should suggest to each reader a situation which might be used to show the contrast of the "outstanding" character and the townspeople.
6. Considering suggestions from your partner, write about an event which can show the contrast between your "outstanding" character and the townspeople. What is the event? Where will it take place? How will the contrast be made evident? Will it be obvious or implied? (5 to 10 minutes)

Your final product is to be a narrative written in the first person plural ("we") point-of-view. You will speak as the representative of the townspeople in general. In this voice, you are to show the "outstanding" character and his/her conflict with the town. The views of the townspeople about the character must be obvious to the reader, but you may not tell everything about the views; show them in the narration of events. You may include more than one event which shows the

conflict of the townspeople and the character, but use the event(s) to make the conflict obvious.

Homework: For the next class, spend 45 minutes on a rough draft of this paper to share in class.

Day Two - Work on Narrative

1. Take out rough drafts. Write your feelings about the writing you have done on the rough draft. Consider any problems you had, any successes, any questions you have at this point. How do you feel about what you have written, about where you will go from here? (5 minutes)
2. Trade rough draft with another student. Read each other's work. Share classroom writing about problems (step 1). Share ideas and advice. Share good starts with the class. Return rough drafts to authors. Final copy of narrative is due on day 5.

Reading and Reader Responses

Teacher will read "A Rose for Emily" aloud as students follow on their copies. Stop at the end of section I. Students are to write about how what has been read makes them feel. (3 minutes) Read section II aloud. Stop. Students are to choose the most important word for them in this section and write it on their papers. Then they are to write about why they chose their words. (3 minutes)

Homework is to finish reading the story and answer the following questions (given to students on dittoed sheets):

Transactions With "A Rose for Emily"

Finish reading the story to yourself. As soon as you are finished, write down your immediate reactions to the story as a whole and to the ending specifically.

Then think over the story a bit and answer the following questions, concentrating on your personal transactions with the story.

1. How do you feel about the end of the story?

2. What kinds of events in your own life have provoked that same feeling?

3. Did you have to look beyond the text for help in order to understand particular parts, passages, sentences, or words in the story? (There is nothing wrong with this. It is indicative of the kind of background Faulkner assumed his audience to have.)

4. To you, what is the most important element in the story? How did you make that choice?

Finish these statements:

5. Miss Emily reminds me of

6. The one question I need answered about this story is

7. Other than the ending, the most puzzling part of this story for me is

8. I would/would not (circle one) like to live in Jefferson because

9. I approve of/reject (circle one) the imaginary world created in this story because

10. I was close to/detached from (circle one) this story because

Day 3 - Shared Reactions and Beginning Groups

1. Share reactions from class, day 2, and written homework. All of those activities and questions were designed to force students to interact on a personal level with the text. Ask for any problems based upon those reactions which need immediate attention.

2. Explain group procedure for critical interpretations. Name groups, leaders, and recorders. Go over question sheets with the whole class. Begin group work.

Group Work

As a group you are to analyze "A Rose for Emily" using various approaches. The questions which follow are guidelines. Use them in conjunction with your notes about and knowledge of the various critical models we have used in class. Your

main goal is to make sense of the story using whatever approaches help in this task. Please at least try each approach. Use any of your written reactions from your reading as a starting point.

One group member is to be recorder and to present your findings to the class as a whole. All of you should keep notes on your findings.

Historical-Cultural

N.B. The copyright date for this story is 1930.

1. Where and when does the story take place? Find all the time cues. Figure the chronology of the events in the story.
2. What changes in social forces and beliefs occur in the various times of the story? How does each different group of townspeople view Miss Emily?
3. What is the generation/age/social class of the spokesperson for the townspeople in relation to the generation/age/social class of Miss Emily?
4. As a reader in the 1980's, how is your view of the characters, actions, and ideas different from that of the narrator and from Faulkner? Is there any way in which the story gains or loses meaning in today's world?

Misc. Historical/Cultural/Social

Feminist

1. Find and list all references to gender in the story. What do these show about the narrator's society?
2. Describe the roles of men and women in this society. Who is in control?
3. How is Miss Emily different from the typical Southern woman of her times? Does she do the things demanded by her sex role in this society? How do others react to her behavior as a woman?
4. How does Miss Emily relate to the men in her life? her father? Homer Barron? the town fathers? her Negro servant?

5. Would Miss Emily's behavior be viewed in a different way if she were a man?

Social

Determine the social structure of this town (various classes and their relationships). How do Miss Emily and Homer Barron fit in this structure? In what ways does the interaction of social classes contribute to the story?

Formal

1. Divide the story into equal size segments, one for each group member. For your page:
   a. Look up any familiar words
   b. List any images
   c. Share these with your group. What do you find in common? How might the images relate to the meanings in the story?
2. Describe each of the following. For each, use your character values list and choose the 3 most important and 3 least important values for each. Be prepared to defend your choices.
   a. Miss Emily
   b. Homer Barron
   c. the townspeople
   d. What might each of these represent beyond an individual character or groups of citizens?
3. Consider the point of view used in the story. Use your own experience in the writing assignment as a contrast.
   a. How does the use of a plural point-of-view influence the story?
   b. Can you perceive more of Miss Emily than your narrator tells you about her? Is your view of her the same as that of the townspeople?

c. What words describe the relationship of Miss Emily and the townspeople? What is there about Miss Emily which makes her the "outstanding" character here?

4. Do you feel the actions in the story are realistic? List realistic and unrealistic events. Describe your feelings about the ending.
5. Name any symbols you find in the story.
6. Explain the title.
7. Do the names given to any of the characters seem to have any meanings?
8. Considering the chronology determined in the historical-cultural section #1, try to analyze Faulkner's use of time in the story.

Archetypal

Can you find any archetypes in this story? (Perhaps begin with any symbols identified.) Look also at the physical world of the town and of Miss Emily.

Analyze Miss Emily's house and its setting as archetype.

Can Miss Emily be understood in terms of any of the female archetypes with which you are familiar?

Psychological

1. Apply Freud's ego-id-superego model to Miss Emily and the townspeople. What meaning does that unlock?
2. Find examples of repression, displacement, etc., in the story. Do you find any actions or behaviors which seem to show the unconscious breaking out?
3. Look at Miss Emily in terms of Erikson's stages. Where is she at various times in the story? Does this help to understand her actions?
4. Look at the story with Kubler-Ross's five stages of dealing with death in mind. How does that model help you in understanding Miss Emily and her behavior?

Following group work, groups can share interpretations with the whole class. Each group can be asked to share its insights using a different critical model.

Analytical Writing

Students are asked to prepare an analytical paper which unlocks some meaning in the story. Their papers are to follow a writing model they have received earlier which basically asks them to state an arguable, significant thesis about the work in question and to support their thesis in the paper with references to the text and to the critical model used for interpretation.

Choose one approach discussed in the groups which interests you and which you feel best unlocks some meaning in the story.

OR

Choose one approach which you feel is best for understanding the story as a whole. Write an argument in favor of this approach, showing how it clarifies this complex story.

Your audience is someone who is familiar with the story and has some knowledge of the various critical models. However, your audience has not been involved in the classroom discussions of the various approaches to this particular story.

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# Multiple Critical Approaches to One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

Carol Forman

Each of the preceding chapters has discussed an approach that students might take to a work of literature. Students and teachers of literature understand the richness of literature demands more than one approach to interpretation. Indeed, part of the job of the reader is to select and apply critical paradigms which the work seems to demand. Our goal -- to foster independent critical thinking about literature through the use of multiple critical approaches -- may sound terribly out of reach for the average high school student until we realize that students do apply models and paradigms in a less structured and less organized way for whatever they read.

What follows is a sample of multiple critical approaches to Ken Kesey's novel, ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST. The choice of models is somewhat arbitrary. Naturally, the models and approaches are selected to fit the demands of the novel. However, there are other specific models which might offer as much interpretive insight to the student. The intention of this section is not to suggest that these are the necessary approaches, but to suggest some possible ways of using multiple critical approaches.

## Beginning at the Beginning: Reader Response

Throughout this book we have stressed that the student's interpretation of any work must begin with his/her initial interaction. From these initial interactions come the critical questions the students will need to answer in order to develop their own interpretations of the text.

ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST is the story of the struggle of McMurphy, a free-spirited, red-haired gambler who tries to beat the system by

getting himself transferred from a prison camp to a mental hospital. There he comes under the "care" of the Big Nurse, Nurse Ratched, who represents all that is oppressive in modern society. The novel ends with the mercy killing of the lobotomized McMurphy by the Indian narrator, Bromden.

One way to get students to focus on their own reactions to the novel is to ask them to describe in a journal entry the most important scene in the novel and to explain why they think this scene is most important. As students share their journal entries, the teacher should ask the students to keep track of the kinds of problems or questions about the novel that are suggested by the journal entries.

When all the students have shared the journal responses, the teacher should ask for a discussion of the critical questions about the novel raised by the journal writing activity. Through the discussion, the teacher should help the students see parallels and connections between and among the questions. At least three kinds of questions will probably result:

1) Was McMurphy's destruction inevitable?
2) Was there something about McMurphy that caused his destruction?
3) Was there something in the world McMurphy lived in that caused his destruction?

At this point, the teacher might suggest to the students that the scenes they chose as most important and the questions about the novel raised by the students' own responses to these scenes have suggested that several kinds of approaches to the novel might prove fruitful for interpretation.

The first question demands that the students go back to the novel and look at the structural clues. Students will probably recognize this as a formalist approach to the novel.

The second questions suggests two approaches: mythological, if the student recognizes in McMurphy a type or pattern of hero that he/she has seen before, and

psychological, if the student is looking at the personality and character of McMurphy.

The third question suggests that the student look at the society inside the institution and possibly at the society in which the novel was written--an historical-cultural approach.

How a teacher proceeds from here will depend largely on the amount of time he/she feels should be spent on the study of the novel. If there is sufficient time, the whole class might follow each of the approaches to the novel. The class might also be divided into groups with each group taking the responsibility for working on one approach and sharing it with the whole class at some point. What is most important is that the students see that their final interpretation of the novel should reflect a consideration of what is suggested by all of the approaches.

Formalistic Approach

As you know from earlier chapters, the Formalist critic relies on a close reading, a study if you will, of the structure of the text as the basis of interpretation. The Formalist critic contends that the meaning of the text comes from the interrelation of its various parts.

Students are often reluctant to return to the text to look at structure because they just don't know what they are looking for or at. It sometimes helps to give them specific tasks. ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST is divided into four parts. These parts are not called chapters, nor are they named. A formalistic study might begin with the assignment to answer these questions:

1) Describe the event at the end of each of the four parts of the novel.
2) Do these ending events have anything in common?
3) Does there seem to be a pattern or a reason for dividing the book this way?

When students chart out the events of the novel in this way, they will see that the first three parts of the novel end with events that show that McMurphy has somehow gotten the best of the oppressive Nurse Ratched. Part I ends with McMurphy leading the sit-in/fantasy ball game in protest over her decision about the World Series. Part II ends with McMurphy putting his hand through the glass at the Nurses' station as a way of letting her know that he is not going to tolerate her control even if she is in charge of his date of release. Part III ends with the men returning from the fishing trip which McMurphy orchestrated and Nurse Ratched opposed. Part IV ends with McMurphy's death and the release of the men from the ward.

As students look for patterns or motifs suggested by the endings of the parts, they will see that each of the four parts ends a battle between McMurphy and Nurse Ratched. The endings of the parts suggest that McMurphy clearly wins each of the first three battles. Students will probably disagree on the question of which character ultimately wins the last battle: Nurse Ratched does succeed in destroying McMurphy, but McMurphy does succeed in destroying Nurse Ratched's control over the men.

At this point, the teacher might direct the students' attention to the gambling motif if it has not already surfaced. McMurphy makes clear in his entrance to the ward that his intention is to take over the poker game on the ward. Students might go back to look at each of the four parts to see if the gambling/poker game motif fits the structure of the novel as a whole. Can each part be seen as a hand? Is there, in each part, a raising of the ante? Does McMurphy risk more in each section? Does the Big Nurse have to resort to increasingly more powerful pressures in each part in her attempts to keep control of McMurphy and her ward? Does the nature of "the game" change in each of the four parts?

As students examine the gambling motif, they will be able to see that in each part McMurphy has to risk more of himself. In the first section, for example, he risks the disfavor of the Nurse. In the second part, he finds out that the Nurse controls the date of his release. Consequently, his "victory" costs him his liberty. McMurphy's victory in the third part with the fishing trip costs him his physical safety; the fight in the shower room results in shock therapy. His final victory over the Big Nurse costs him his life.

Students should be reminded here that what they are looking for are clues in the novel which will help them decide whether or not McMurphy's death was inevitable. Through their analysis of the parts of the novel and the gambling/poker hand motif suggested by it, students will see that the conflict between McMurphy and Nurse Ratched has more than one level of significance. Students might come up with some of the following symbolic conflicts:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Nurse Ratched | vs | McMurphy |
| combine | vs | individual |
| machine | vs | nature |
| control | vs | freedom |

As students look at these levels of conflict, they will probably agree that while McMurphy would win a simple battle of personalities with the Nurse, he seems doomed in the novel because he is battling a whole system rather than a person.

Some students might have trouble grasping the levels of significance. These students could benefit by looking at another structural element of the novel, the point of view. In order to focus on the point of view, students might do the following assignment:

1) How would the novel be different if it were told from McMurphy's or Nurse Ratched's point of view--or perhaps from Harding's?

2) What observations and understandings would be missing from the novel if it were told by anyone other than Bromden?

As students share their answers, they will recognize that Bromden has been on the ward longer than anyone else and has seen other men (Ellis, Ruckley, Taber, etc.) challenge the system of Big Nurse and fail. This foreshadowing provides one clue that McMurphy's defeat is inevitable. Also, only Bromden can provide that parallel of the defeat of the leader (his father) outside of the hospital setting. Students will see that Bromden's continual comparison of McMurphy and his father, the Chief, suggests that the conflict is more than a personality conflict between two people, but suggests a pattern in society as a whole. Again, for students looking at the question of the inevitability of McMurphy's defeat, the parallel with the Chief offers more evidence.

Archetypal Approach

When students begin to apply multiple approaches to literature, they often see that one approach leads to another. In this treatment of ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST, we have moved from Reader Response techniques to a Formalist approach to the novel. The Formalist approach has helped to resolve one of the critical questions about the work, but has left the others unresolved. This approach has led the reader to the suggestion that the end was inevitable, but has not suggested why. An archetypal approach to the novel will suggest one way of explaining the inevitability of McMurphy's defeat.

As you know from earlier chapters, the myth critic seeks out those things which suggest or elicit the universals of human experience. There are several mythical patterns in the novel. What ones the students will recognize will depend largely on what kinds of experience they have had with myth criticism. One archetypal pattern that is quite evident in this novel is the myth of the sacrificial king.

The mythical sacrificial king is the one who must suffer or die for the benefit of the entire society. Fraser (The Golden Bough) identifies the mythical prototype as the annual king who was sacrificed to insure a good harvest. The evils of the people are transferred to the sacred king or animal. The king or animal is then sacrificed and in some cases eaten; this activity provides atonement and spiritual cleansing for the people. Both Christ and Oedipus are well-known examples of the sacrificial king.

Individually or in groups, students might be asked to go back to three sections of the book: the description of the fishing trip, the description of McMurphy's shock therapy session, and the description of the events that follow Billy Bibbit's suicide. As they reread, students should note any religious symbolism that they find. Some students might also read in the New Testament of the Bible at least one description of Christ's calming of the seas (Luke 8:22 or Mark 4:35) and of the Crucifixion (Matthew 26-28 or John 12-21).

As students share their findings, they will see a number of parallels that suggest that McMurphy is a Christ figure. Students should discuss the effect of this parallel. If students are not familiar with the myth of the scapegoat king, the teacher should present it as a pattern. If the pattern is one that they have worked through before, students might answer the following questions as an assignment before a whole group discussion:

1) Are there places in the novel where McMurphy is presented as a man above the rest, capable of more than any of the others and/or consequently responsible for them?

2) From the beginning of the novel, McMurphy does a great deal for the men. What are his motivations? Does he do things only to assure his place as a con man, or does he do brave and altruistic things?

3) If McMurphy's intentions are not always for the good of the men, where, when and how does he get caught in the trap of becoming the saviour to the men?

4) Is there anything in the novel that suggests that McMurphy is being set up or sacrificed because he is strong?

As students put together their findings of religious symbols in the sections assigned with the answers to these questions, the Christ figure motif will emerge as a strong symbolic pattern. In summary of the evidence, students might conclude that just as Christ was sacrificed to release humans from the bondage of original sin, so McMurphy seems to be sacrificed to release the men from the constraints of the hospital -- and from their own human weaknesses. (McMurphy's death gives Bromden the strength to throw the control panel through the window and escape just as it provides the impetus for all the non-committed patients to release themselves.)

Students using an archetypal approach to the novel may conclude that one reason why the defeat of McMurphy is inevitable is that he is made, as a result of both his own strength and the nature of the needs of the men in their situation, a sacrificial king. The religious imagery suggests the parallel to Christ, the sacrificial king of our culture. The parallels to Bromden's father suggest that the pattern is not unique to one culture.

A possible writing assignment:

Our study of the novel has suggested that we might see McMurphy as a Christ figure/sacrificial king. Bromden continually compares McMurphy to his father the Chief.

1) Is Bromden's father also a kind of sacrificial king? How do we know?

2) What conclusions can a reader draw from the parallels of Christ, McMurphy and Chief Bromden?

Psychological Approach

Because the action of the novel takes place in a mental hospital and because the book is full of psychological jargon, the questions of mental illness, sanity and its measurement cannot fail to come up. As students look at the conflict between Nurse Ratched and McMurphy, they will undoubtedly question who is saner than who.

Before beginning this exercise, student should be reminded that they are still dealing with the questions that came from their own responses to the reading. The two previous approaches have suggested that McMurphy's defeat is somehow inescapable, and that there are some qualities of the hero in McMurphy that make him a sacrificial victim for the more needy men. This exercise is designed to allow students greater insights into the psychological workings of the characters and the ward so that they can better answer their own question: Is there something about McMurphy that caused his destruction?

Students should begin with the following writing assignment:

Choose one of the following characters: Billy Bibbit, Chief Bromden or Harding. In an essay, tell whether you think McMurphy or the Nurse does more to make him a functioning human being. Find specific passages from the novel to support your findings.

As students share their writings, ask them to speculate on an overall statement of what McMurphy does for the men that the Nurse does not. In other words, students might see that just as there is a conflict between McMurphy and the Nurse, so there seems to be a dichotomy in the way that they treat other people.

At this point the teacher might introduce the following model. It is derived from Carl Roger's ON BECOMING A PERSON. In this book, Rogers says that the person who is becoming "that self which one truly is" will follow the following ten "directions":

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1) away from facades

2) away from "oughts"

3) away from meeting expectations

4) away from pleasing others

5) toward self-direction

6) toward "being process" (as opposed to "being product")

7) toward being complexity

8) toward openness to experience

9) toward acceptance of others

10) toward trust of self

Rogers claims that these directions lead a person to be more open to experiences and to a trust in one's own ability to deal with the complexity of life's experiences. As the class discusses these directions in light of the findings of the writing assignments, students will probably draw the conclusion that invariably the Nurse moves in directions which oppose those that Rogers suggests for healthy individuals while McMurphy urges the men to act in ways that parallel Rogers' suggestions. If students need more reinforcement of this idea, the class might reread McMurphy's description of the "chicken peckin' party" or the description of the fishing trip or Bromden's account of the Shock Therapy session. As student reread, they might be asked to document the specific "directions" being employed by McMurphy or denied by Nurse Ratched.

Through the sharing of these two activities, students will see the terrible irony that the Nurse and her carefully chosen staff work to develop fear, anxiety and ill-health in the men while McMurphy spends much of his time trying to "blow the men back up" and convince them of their own strengths. Returning to the question of whether there is something in McMurphy as a person that causes his destruction, students will see that McMurphy is destroyed because he had the

power and saw the need to free the men. The Nurse cannot do what she does without the men as a captive group. The psychological parallels with the motif of the sacrificial king will be evident to students.

Historical-Cultural Approach

At some point in the discussion of the novel, the questions about the setting will come up. When it does, the teacher may want to remind students of the remaining critical question raised by their initial responses: Is there something in the world McMurphy lives in that causes his destruction? The students may also want to discuss the following related questions: Are the events of the novel unique to events that might take place in a mental hospital, or are there suggestions in the novel that the hospital represents a larger social context? If so, are there any connections between what happened to McMurphy and what happens in society in general?

In order to focus the attention of students on the workings of the social groups in the novel, the class should be divided into four groups. Each group should spend one class period on one of the following assignments:

1) Define with specific details what Bromden calls the Combine and explain how the Combine destroyed his father.
2) Describe what happens in the "chicken peckin' party" and decide, with evidence from the novel, whether Harding's claim that the men are rabbits who need wolves to tell them who they are is accurate.
3) Explain why Billy Bibbit committed suicide.
4) Explain why Bromden killed McMurphy.

Students should share their findings with the whole group. Discussion of the findings will center on the kinds of effects a group has on an individual.

At this point, the teacher should introduce the following terms and concepts from the work of Emile Durkheim if the students have not yet used this model.

Emile Durkheim described societies in terms of their degree of integration or unity. He described two idealized extremes: collective conscience and anomie. A society with a collective conscience is a society in which all the members for that society value the same things and hold the same set of symbolic representations and understandings about the world.

A society experiencing anomie is characterized by a complete lack of social imperative and support. Obviously, both of these are ideals and never reached in any society, but it is impossible to describe societies in relation to these two extremes.

If students list the pros and cons of each idealized state, they will see that a society which is highly integrated and closely regulates its individuals is most likely to cushion the individual from the effects of the outside world, yet it also demands a great deal of conformity. On the other hand, societies which do not dictate strong moral norms and allow a great deal of freedom do not protect the individual to any great extent, but neither do they expect a great deal from him/her.

Durkheim also described two kinds of unity a group might have, mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity. Mechanical solidarity is based on all members of the society behaving in the same way. Organic solidarity is arranged around the interdependence of a group of people each contributing a different kind of service to the group.

As students share their answers to the four questions asked, they will see why the Nurse was so effective in controlling the men and why this kind of control frightened Bromden and McMurphy so much. The routine of the Nurse in the hospital is an extreme example of what Durkheim calls mechanical solidarity. Students might remember some of the details of life in the hospital -- the

organization by the clock and the insistence that each man do exactly what the rest of the group is doing — which demonstrate that this is so. The group which worked on the definition of the Combine will demonstrate the parallels between the pattern inside the hospital which demands conformity and the pattern of the Combine which demands the same.

If students are asked to compare this kind of structure with the kind of group structure McMurphy tried to create with the men on the fishing trip and in the basketball game, they will see that McMurphy was trying to reconstruct a more organic unity based on individual participation rather than conformity.

Durkheim also studied the effects of various social structures on the suicide rate. He defined two major kinds of suicide, anomistic and altruistic. When the bonds and limitations of society are too stringent and allow no freedom, the individual who feels he/she can never conform will commit anomistic suicide. Altruistic suicide is the kind committed in a ritualistic way for the good of society, such as harikari.

Billy's suicide is an example of what Durkheim calls anomistic suicide. The bonds of his mother's and the Nurse's control were so tight that the threat of the exposure of his non-conformity was too great to bear. Students will see, too, that the effects were not limited to Billy. Nurse created the same kind of controls on the ward with the observation book and the therapy sessions.

The question of McMurphy's attack on the Nurse as a kind of altruistic suicide may surface, and there will undoubtedly be discussion for and against this definition. Most students will agree, however, that Bromden kills McMurphy to prevent him from being a tool for the Big Nurse in her efforts to continue her oppression of the group.

Some students may want to tackle the wider implications suggested by the novel by answering one or both of the following essay questions:

1) Evaluate your own societies -- school, community, nation -- in terms of their similarities to and differences from the ward and the Combine.

2) Does society demand the sacrifice of the strong individual as this society demanded the sacrifice of McMurphy? Does any society victimize those who try to change it or live outside of it?

Conclusion

One excellent concluding exercise is to ask students to write an essay which develops an answer to one or more of the critical questions raised through the reader response technique. This allows the students an opportunity to draw on the insights he/she has developed through the various class activities and to use multiple critical techniques somewhat independently.

Some students, especially the older and more accelerated ones, might be asked to evaluate the effectiveness of two or more approaches to the development of the interpretation of the novel. This exercise gives students an opportunity to work through the strengths and limitations of several approaches to a given work -- and possibly to become more skilled in selecting fruitful approaches for his/her next interpretive task.

# Yes, But Does It Work?

Doris M. Quick

If you have read this monograph, you must be saying to yourself, yes, I see that approaching a literary work from a variety of critical stances probably enriches my reading of the text, and if I taught certain critical models to my students it is likely that they would be more sophisticated and critical readers. But is that true? Can you prove it? Not unexpectedly, the teachers whose chapters you have read in this text felt compelled to ask themselves the same questions, and to that end, designed an experimental study that asked the question this way: Will students whose teachers have introduced more than two critical models in the literature classroom write better literary essays than students whose teachers have taught literature without the introduction of critical models?

We proceeded this way: each of the ten teachers in the project agreed to identify a control teacher, a person with about the same teaching experience, who taught in the same school, who taught classes similar in grade and ability level as the experimental teachers. Although there were some problems (a control teacher got sick, some teachers taught only one-semester course, etc.), a total of eighteen teachers did complete the experiment: nine control and nine experimental. Of these, there were a total of eight grade 9 and 10 classrooms (four control and four matched experimental) and ten grade 11 and 12 classrooms (five control and five experimental).

First, it was decided that students would write literary essays, once in the fall of 1984 before any instruction took place and again in the spring of 1985 after instruction. Control teachers agreed to teach their usual literature course in the usual way while experimental teachers agreed to introduce at least two critical models to students in addition to using reader response strategies for entering literature with students.

Gene Garber, the director of the Capital District Writing Project who taught the experimental teachers in the summer of 1984, was assisted by David Marhafer and me in the selection of literature to use in a testing situation. We wanted literature that we believed to be on the reading level of the students to be tested. We decided to select short stories for students in a grade 9 and 10 pool and poetry for students in an 11 and 12 pool. We looked for literature that lent itself to a variety of critical interpretations. In addition, we wanted literature that was not widely anthologized. Finally, we selected an A form and a B form for both the pre-test and the post-test. We took this precaution in case one of the pieces turned out to have hidden problems for students we hadn't anticipated. By flip-flopping the versions of the stories, we mitigated any possibility of a difficult work invalidating our results.

During day #1 of the two-day testing time in the fall and again in the spring, students were instructed to read the literature carefully and to generate up to ten questions the answers to which would help them understand the story. They were then asked to select their three best questions and to make any notes or diagrams that would help them answer their own question. On day 2 of the experiment, students were asked to write an essay in which they interpreted the story, that is, discussed its meaning.

When all the papers, both pre- and post-test were collected, they were checked to make sure that only students who had written both a pre- and a post-test paper were included in the study. The papers were then divided into two pools: one for grades 9 and 10 and another for grades 11 and 12. The papers were randomized and trained raters, graduate students not connected with the experiment who had had considerable experience rating college freshmen compositions, were hired to do the holistic scoring.

The scoring procedure was as follows. After training, papers were holistically rated 1-4 with 4 being a high score. Each paper was rated twice by different readers, and the scores summed, so a range of 2-8 was produced. In the event that a paper received two scores that differed by more than one point (a "1" and a "3", for example), a third blind rating was given and an average taken. Remarkably, only 5 such papers had to be re-rated - a testament to the inter-rater reliability of the graduate students. The raters were instructed to overlook features of writing (handwriting, organization, style, for example) and to concentrate on the writer's ability to interpret the story.

The raters determined that the characteristics of the ninth and tenth grade pool of papers broke out this way:

The "1" papers were merely summaries of the story or poem and may have contained some misreading of factual content.

The "2" papers showed evidence that the writer was attempting to rise above mere summary, but the attempt was not carried off convincingly. There was often a statement not backed up by sufficient evidence. There were "easy" or "pat" solutions to problems raised or the discussion was somewhat off the mark.

The "3" papers suggested the writer may have had some insight into a critical school, even fleetingly and even though the school was almost never named or its tenets discussed. Nevertheless, the "3" papers differed from the "2" papers in that the writers attempted to bring some outside insight to the interpretation. Again, there was often not enough convincing evidence or the evidence may have been misapplied or the solution a little too "pat".

The "4" papers exhibited a firm and convincing statement of significance backed up by appropriate and convincing evidence. Although specific critical schools were almost never mentioned, the writer seemed to have an intuitive

understanding of some psychological or formalist insights. The best papers were marked by the writer's ability to take data from the literature out of order and to marshall this data in defense of an idea.

The results of the rating of the grade 9 and 10 papers are shown in the tables that follow.

| | PRE | POST | DIFF | STANDARD DEVIATION | 1/3 SD? | Value of t= 4.473 | Degrees of Freedom | Is the difference significant? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental N = 105 | 3.84 | 4.73 | .89 | 1.32 | .44 Yes | 4.47 | 208 | Yes |
| Control N = 80 | 3.68 | 4.64 | .96 | 130 | .43 Yes | 4.76 | 157 | Yes |
| | No Significant Difference | No Significant Difference | | | | | | |

Value of t at .05 level of probability = 1.96

Four comparisons are possible from these data. The statistics show that both the experimental and the control ninth and tenth grade students began the experiment at about the same place. There is no significant different in the pre-test mean scores. Moreover, there is no significant difference between the experimental and control post-test scores. What is interesting, however, is the fact that both the control and experimental students improved significantly over a year in their ability to write literary essays. There was no significant difference in the amount of growth shown by the control as compared with the experimental group. Both groups grew more than 1/3 of a standard deviation, a number that suggests more growth than would be expected if no teaching had taken place.

For the eleventh and twelfth graders, the following characteristics were identified in the literary essays:

The "1" papers tended to merely summarize the literature.

The "2" papers summarized, but there was more development of idea, some speculation, some personal observation.

The "3" papers moved away from summary. There was evidence that the writer offered an interpretation, a discussion of the meaning of the story albeit without mention of a critical paradigm.

The "4" papers were characterized by an interpretation that was supported by convincing evidence from the story and from some outside source. There was mention of a critical school or an attempt to apply a model to the discussion. Again, data were taken out of order in order to present an analysis and interpretation.

The results of the eleventh and twelth grade ratings are shown in the chart below.

| | PRE | POST | DIFF | STANDARD DEVIATION | 1/3 SD? | Value of t | Degrees of Freedom | Is the difference Significant |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental N = 115 | 3.67 | 4.95 | 1.28 | 1.48 | .49 Yes | 6.14 | 228 | Yes |
| Control N = 74 | 3.90 | 4.02 | .12 | 1.81 | .60 No | .418 | 147 | No |

| No Significant Difference | Difference Approaches Significance |
|---|---|

Value of t at .05 probability = 1.97

The same comparisons can be made with this group, but the results are different. Here we see that the control and experimental students began at about the same place: there is no significant difference in the pre-test performances of the control and experimental groups. However, the experimental group posted significant gains while the control group did not. These results suggest that the experimental eleventh and twelfth graders were more successful than the control students in their ability to write literary essays, and there is the suggestion that their exposure to critical models contributed to their improvement.

Like most classroom experiments, this study raises more questions than it answers. For example, why are the younger students, both experimental and control, seemingly unable to apply the literary models? The students improved, but few students successfully applied models to aid in interpretation. Is there a developmental factor? Are ninth graders developmentally unable to rise above summary to deal with abstraction? Or is the writing a problem? Is it simply too difficult for younger students to write an interpretation? If we interviewed them, would they be able to deal with abstraction more successfully?

The good news is that a year in English class makes a difference: both experimental and control ninth and tenth grade and experimental eleventh and twelfth grade students improved in their ability to write literary essays.

For teachers interested in multiple approaches to literature, the study suggests that for eleventh and twelfth graders anyway, teaching critical models and showing how to apply them to literature may provide students with keys to help unlock the literature we present to them.